UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF IDENTITY IN EDUCATION

BY

KARYN A. COOPER ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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DEDICATED TO

My husband, daughter, mother, and brother

ABSTRACT

What is it like to be a child moving through school contexts? How does the way children learn echo in the learning of adults; then, reciprocally, how do adults (i.e. teachers) shape the way children learn? Does a cultural attribution of differences between child and adult circumscribe the potential learning of individuals? These three questions arise from my simultaneous experience as a classroom teacher, a teacher of undergraduate students and a graduate student in education. They serve as beacons to guide a narrative hermeneutic exploration, informed by major theories of child development as well as alternative discourse on cultural notions of identity, into the sense of identity expressed by learners in each of the three groups. While the principal participants in the inquiry were graduate students in education, the stories and questions of students in undergraduate and elementary grades are integral to the understanding of the cyclical nature of identity in education, that is, the interrelationship of child and adult in human identity.

The dissertation reveals the fragmentation of the individuated self as pervasive in western culture, specifically in the social construction of the dichotomy between child and adult. Attention is drawn to the potential for alienation in society's perpetuation of the dichotomy. By inquiring into the commonalities and differences in the experiences of child and adult learners assumptions that undergird many major theories of child development are exposed. An alternative to reliance

on such theories, recursive practice, is described. Recursive practice encourages a process of ongoing reflexive questioning in children, in student teachers and in researchers, a process which may infuse teaching and learning with the understanding of child and adult as co-constitutional.

Such an understanding has implications for the education of teachers. First, educators should create the opportunity for adult learners, especially student teachers, to recall their childhood voices and to engage with the ambiguity of their own experience. Such a process may free students to explore and value multiple perspectives in learning. Further, it may allow them to recognize the wisdom of children, including insights they have experienced as children, and to respond in more dynamic ways.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hiding in the Light 1

Chapter 1 2

Web of Inquiry 2

A Description of the Inquiry 2

Beginning Questions 3

Choosing a Method 6

Hermeneutic Inquiry: Exploring Meanings Behind the Texts 8

Philosophical Hermeneutics: Life as Text 9

The Embodied Nature of Narrative Inquiry 11

On Issues of Validity 12

Multiple Ways of Knowing 15

Social, Political, and Ethical Considerations 16

The Subtext of a Sacred Story: Virginia Woolf as Author /Person 17

In Search of Deeper Understanding 19

On Multiple Perspectives: The Story of Anne 20

The Value of Other Points of View: A Narrative Hermeneutic Exploration 22

Weaving Three Strands: Toward a Research Perspective 25

Chapter 2 27

Picking Up Strands of the Web 27

My Brother Enters the Abyss 27

In Play With the Play 31

Emotional and the Personal....................31

Philosophical Viewpoints in the Inquiry....................35

Rethinking Who We Are....................36

The Structures of Knowing....................37

Signposts to the Text....................41

Chapter 3....................44

Search for Consciousness: Out of Silences....................44

Plunging Into the Abyss....................45

The Lost World of Feelings: To Be Nobody....................49

Chapter 4....................52

Self and Society, and the Multiple "I's" of Teacher Identity....................52

Setting the Context: Situating the Self....................54

Sources of the Self....................58

Compliance to Stereotypical Images: A Given Role....................60

An Unnatural Split Between Child and Adult Identity....................63

Where Our Prescribed Role as Teacher Begins....................66

Emerging From Patriarchy: A Silent Identity....................70

Signposts to the Text....................70

Chapter 5....................72

Research and the Convergence of Personal and Cultural Scripts....................72

Problems with Interpretation....................73

Two Kinds of Dialogue....................76

Personal Scripts....................80

Returning to the Inquiry....................81

Chapter 6....................84

Where Child and Adult Converge....................84

Hearing Through Silences: Perspectives on Returning to School....86
Shaping Childhood Identity....91
The Residue of Fragmentation....95
Thinking Badly....97
The Substance of Representation in Education....100
Are Children so Different from Us?....102
Language: The Elusive Butterfly....106
A Return....109
Signposts to the Text....114
Chapter 7....117
When Curriculum Becomes a Stranger....117
Childhood In a Kit....117
The Child Remembered....126
Chapter 8....136
Hearing Through Silence: Lullabies of Myth....136
Changing Cultural Scripts....136
Changing Daily Scripts....138
Implications of these changes....145
Chapter 9....147
Creating Spaces for Possibilities....147
Becoming Aware of Fragmentation....147
Questioning Enables the Search....148
Informed Action for my Practice as a University Teacher....150
Fragmentation and Recursion:....155
Further Actions....157

An Awareness of Wisdom 161

References 162

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Is development continuous or discontinuous?..................................93

HIDING IN THE LIGHT

Cursive writing on the classroom wall
stretches before me on pristine page

A corpse with no head
mind holds the pen

Hegemony of words
taints every breath
typing its cultural script

Muffled voices
blanketed in lullabies of myth

Can we hear through silence?

Many of my preconceptions regarding how self is interpreted through schooling events are voiced in the shards of the poem presented above. These fragments, not unlike the fragments of any life, address the personal, cultural and historical aspects of self. In this inquiry, by reflecting my thoughts back and forth through shards of my own history, it has been possible to illuminate aspects of my experience, bringing to light questions of how larger cultural processes, such as schooling, shape who we are and who we are becoming.

CHAPTER 1

Web of Inquiry

A Description of the Inquiry

This inquiry proceeded out of a desire to deepen my own understanding of human experience and, in particular, children's experiences of schooling. I did not begin my inquiry with specific research questions in hand, searching for answers already formed in my mind. Rather, my questions evolved through the process of inquiry itself. However, it is now possible to extract and formalize questions from the interconnected strands. These are stated here, at the very beginning of the story of my inquiry, to give readers a framework for clearer understanding of the process.

It began with a sense of my own ignorance, with a sense of the problematic, born of the silence of my own childhood. I sense this silence grew out of complex conditions that were responsible for much of the separation and alienation I felt and continue to feel in educational contexts. I believe my personal sense of knowing connects with much contemporary literature in education which speaks to a fragmented sense of self (Gergen, 1991; Levin, 1985; Miller, 1988).

If I turn to books for the general public, to the list of best selling books, I also find the alienation, the spiritual emptiness of which I speak (Canfield & Hansen, 1996; Hillman, 1996: Redfield, 1993). Yet, perhaps because we are human we have always been concerned about psychological fragmentation.

Wordsworth, over two hundred years ago, wrote of psychological fragmentation out of a sense of spiritual emptiness:

> The World is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
> This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
> The winds that will be howling at all hours,
> And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
> For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
> It moves us not. (Wordsworth, 1959, p. 72)

Beginning Questions: Sensing the Problematic

The sense of the problematic reveals itself in the questions that evolved through my inquiry. Engagement in the process of questioning becomes one of ever-widening circles, in which each question enfolds and unfolds other questions, towards a greater and greater depth of understanding. While it is possible to frame these questions independently, they must be looked at in relation to each other as parts of an integrated whole:

1. What is it like to be a child moving through school contexts?

Even asking this question leads to an investigation into the interactive nature of self/other. I begin my investigation in Chapter 2, by exploring my own experience, in facing the alienation that we all encounter in becoming more conscious of who we are in relation to others. Chapter 3 explores the multilayeredness of self, in particular the child/adult/teacher identities.

Chapter 4 considers selfhood as a process of social interaction in which social norms both delimit and embrace who we are as children, as adults, and as teachers, the reciprocal perceptions of which serve to illuminate and inform educational practice.

2. How does the way we learn as children echo in the learning of adults; then, reciprocally, how do adults (ie. teachers) shape the way children learn?

The research process as a learning tool, as described in Chapter 5, examines taken-for-granted assumptions and the role of the researcher in the process. My primary participants were recently registered graduate students in education. The direction of inquiry is outlined in Chapter 6 as one not consciously selected but arising from my own childhood and teaching experiences, crystalized in my return to school as a graduate student, and causing my reassessment of the kind of knowledge that our education system validates for both child and adult learners. The socially constructed oppositional relationship between children and adults, as described in Chapter 7, led to a consideration in Chapter 8 of the need to rethink the importance of childhood experiences, to remember the child in oneself, to acknowledge the cyclical nature of the adult/child relationship and to look at this paradoxical situation in which both the potential for unity and fragmentation exist. This chapter also envisions what an alternative view of childhood in education might look like, one which honours the questions and voices of children, and dispels the silence resulting from dominant cultural scripts.

3. Does a cultural attribution of differences between child and adult circumscribe the potential learning of individuals?

Chapter 9 offers an awareness of the fragmentation of the individuated self as constructed in our culture, specifically the child/adult dichotomy. Chapter 9 also considers the need for questions as tools enabling a search for a way out of the cyclical silences imposed by culturally dominant discourses, and possible implications for children, adults and teachers, within the practice of teacher education.

These questions resonated with a silence inside of me. They were not new questions; they consumed me from just below the surface, ineffable — something in them yet to be named when I was a child. These issues continue to go unnamed and have the power to build an unease in my consciousness.

By closely examining some of the sources of my own unease, I came to an understanding of how the dominant discourses and practices of society helped create the silence and spiritual emptiness of which I speak. Ultimately, I hope this process of inquiry will enable participation in the creation of a more humane world, a world which honours the imagination and respects the experience of individuals, whether they are children or adults.

This ongoing process of research demanded continuous scrutiny from both outside of and within myself. A description of the process is interwoven throughout the text of the inquiry. An outline of the problem alone was inadequate. Rather I was interested with those lacunae, discontinuities, layered within the stories of my pursuit of the research, that gave me pause for thought. Furthermore, I believe these lacunae called not so much for a single version of narrative, but for multiple narratives, all located within tension/with intention, surprise, and ambiguity, both concealing and revealing insight into human understanding.

Tensions within my own life story prompted an inward glance at my own personal history, looking for the concealed, pushing me out to engage the world so that I might understand from many perspectives. A shifting, layered perception of unnamed issues may not be unique to me alone. For, I believe, as Greene (1978) suggests, that "a human being lives, as it were, in two orders — one created by his or her relations with the perceptual fields that are given in experience, the other created by his or her relations with a human and social environment" (p. 2).

During the course of my inquiry, I also attended conferences, completed writing projects, assumed a new and challenging role as a university teacher, and, on a more personal level, became a parent for the first time. All these new diverse activities added passion and immediacy to my research. This confirms my belief that research, like life's project itself, is a complex process that is continually shaped by factors that may or may not be in the researcher's immediate line of vision. Similarly, I believe educational research itself must be conscious of the wider and deeper context in which its specific projects take place, and encompass the whole of life and its meanings.

Choosing a Method

Many recent contemporary educational researchers (Aoki, 1991; Carson, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995) have advocated an approach which brings the researcher closer to the research participants in an attempt to question the meaning of shared experience, that is, the text. Some of the researchers interested in questions of partiality and perspective in educational research have called their approach narrative inquiry; others follow from the tradition of hermeneutic understanding.

This research is an engagement in interpretive inquiry, an exploration of my wonders about children's experience and understandings of schooling and education. The subject of my research and my process or method of investigation required interconnection, since there was a creative tension between the two. Only a combination of approaches — the attention to meaning afforded by hermeneutic inquiry and the possibility of intimate personal connection between researcher, participants (through structured contact, serendipitous encounters, and life experiences) and context offered by narrative inquiry — gave me hope of addressing this complex issue. For this reason, it is not my intention to present a single thesis supported by arguments and evidence presented in a detached and formal manner; rather, because I sought to combine hermeneutic inquiry and narrative inquiry, I selected the mode of inquiry and representation which Lopate (1994) named the informal essay:

> The essayist attempts to surround a something — a subject, a mood, a problematic irritation — by coming at it from all angles, wheeling and diving like a hawk, each seemingly digressive spiral actually taking us closer to the heart of the matter. (p. xxxviii)

The informal essay is a skeptical and subversive form of writing in which the author plays with the subject matter from all conceivable angles, and often becomes self-skeptical in the process. This writing style is both personal and playful. Contradictions and digressions are not flaws to be avoided but an inevitable dimension of the process of understanding the human condition as one comes to understand it.

The style of the informal essay with its emphasis on gaining deeper understanding of its subject matter through examining it from many sides is consistent with both hermeneutic and narrative inquiry, and responds to the needs of my interpretive inquiry. This coherence of content and form is consistent with the position of Richardson (1994):

> Writing from our Selves should strengthen the community of qualitative researchers and the individual voices within it, because we will be more fully present in our work, more honest, more engaged. (p. 516)

Although there are differences among contemporary educational researchers, they have in common a more embodied way of understanding a subject and the research process involved.

Hermeneutic Inquiry: Exploring Meanings Behind the Texts

The search for the deep meanings of lives understood as narrative texts and the ongoing process of interpreting them is essentially a hermeneutical endeavor. Hermeneutics is the theory and philosophy of the interpretation of meaning; it has a lengthy and complex history. Different schools and different thinkers have offered varying definitions of it. As Mueller-Vollmer (1989) points out, hermeneutics is both an historical concept and an ongoing concern in the human sciences. He goes on to say that some see hermeneutics as a method for interpreting literary texts, and some see it as an intellectual movement. Its historical emphasis on rigorous scholarship, which is still very much with us today, is based on the tradition established by

Chladenius, a university teacher in the eighteenth century. Chladenius, a man of his time, wanted to provide a consistent theory and the rules for interpretation. This is not surprising given that during the Renaissance and the Reformation the Church needed a way for interpreting the holy scriptures. As Mueller-Vollmer (1989) points out, interpretation has been around since antiquity. However, it was not until the Renaissance and the Reformation that hermeneutics as a discipline came into being. Following the logic of Aristotle, and the enlightenment thinkers in general, the grounds for correct interpretation were seen to reside in reason itself. In fact the "contention was that like logic itself hermeneutics rested on certain generally applicable rules and principles which were valid for all those fields of knowledge which relied on interpretation" (Mueller-Vollmer, p. 4).

The more current works of Betti and Hirsch (1976) also epitomize this tradition of generally applicable rules of interpretation. In other words, "the aim of interpretation is to reproduce the meaning or intention of the author by following well-defined hermeneutical canons that guide reading" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 9). This is the essence of "scientific" hemeneutics. In the following section I look at "philosophical" hermeneutics.

Philosophical Hermeneutics: Life as Text

While traditional scientific hermeneutics assumes the accessibility of an original interpretation of the author's text, philosophical hermeneutics allows the interactive role of the reflective self in relation to the text.

In recent times, philosophical hermeneutics, as developed by Gadamer (1991), questions the assumptions of scientific hermeneutics. Philosophical hermeneutics attempts to bring us back to the everyday world by questioning just how a particular understanding has come to be. "Philosophical hermeneutics is an effort to rethink what we are and how we might relate ourselves to the world" (Crusius, 1991, p. 15). According to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, "understanding begins . . . when something addresses us. This is the primary hermeneutic condition . . . The essence of the question is the opening up and keeping open of possibilities" (1960, p. 266). In his text Gallagher (1992) also elaborates on the many competing theories and practices of hermeneutics that both historically and currently shape our practice in education, including conservative hermeneutics, moderate hermeneutics, critical hermeneutics, and radical hermeneutics. He manages to bring hermeneutics into the present world and relate it to education by suggesting that hermeneutics "examines human understanding in general." This is in accordance with Gadamer's notion (1960, 1977, 1991) that all understanding is interpretation.

Philosophical hermeneutics was not created in a vacuum but rather rested on the work of many. It got its impetus from the Romantic movement in central Europe which revolutionalized the intellectual landscape. Schleiermacher, a Protestant theologian, is credited with grounding hemenuetics in the concept of understanding (Palmer, 1969). To be no longer concerned with simply decoding a proper line of thought but, instead, to be trying to illuminate the conditions for the possibility of understanding actually to occur, was a major departure of thought. Perhaps the real power of philosophical hermeneutics is the way it gives a scholar a method for hearing and seeing what is questionable in a given situation or context.

The Embodied Nature of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry, like philosophical hermeneutics, offers no one method designed to help the researcher get at normative truth (Weinsheimer, 1985 p. 7). Rather, the researcher must continually be attentive to the descriptive aspects of the storied experience of individuals and the conditioning factors that both limit and privilege the interpretation of a text. The researcher's understanding is defined by the research questions and interests (biographical landscape) in relation to the cultural backdrop (social landscape) into which she/he is born. Narrative inquiry is an expression of a broader qualitative research movement within education which struggles to address human experience in more tangible ways. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) describe the embodied nature of their narrative inquiry approach:

> The narrative study of experience brings body to mind and mind to body; it connects autobiography to action and an intentional future; it connects these to social history and direction; and it links the pluralistic extremes of formalism to the concreteness of specific actions. (p. 245)

Narrative inquiry emphasizes understanding human experience through examining and interpreting the details of everyday lives. In my view, narrative inquiry has as an aim similar to that of phenomenology, that is the study of human phenomena and, not unlike phenomenology, "attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying or abstracting it" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Narrative inquiry is not, however, a process that intends to discover "absolute truths" or even phenomenological "essence". It is, however, a process that demands continuous scrutiny of "normative truths".

Narrative inquiry often begins with an account of a personal experience. An educational researcher grapples with a personal story to interpret what becomes increasingly problematic and, in this way, leads to further questions about the meaning of the experience. This sense of the problematic may become the driving force behind the inquiry, pushing the researcher to collect detailed stories of other people's experiences and practices in similar situations, or to tell and retell stories of his/her own experiences and practices. The research process unfolds to contain within its compass an analysis of the context in which experiences occur. This examination may ultimately lead to more questions, which may challenge taken-for-granted notions and widely-held beliefs within the educational community. Narrative inquiry, then, involves exploring the interface between personal experience and the larger structures of knowledge-making in our society. Narrative inquiry is a process of searching without a clearly defined ending because the answers it finds often open to larger possibilities.

On Issues of Validity

Educational researchers like Clandinin and Connelly (1988, 1992, 1993), Eisner (1991); and feminist theorists like Code (1991) and Oakley (1981) are some who express the urgency for qualitative research methods into understanding of human experience as an alternative to the reductionism of quantitative methodologies.

There are many well argued critiques in the field of education that speak to the need for further research in the explication of understanding as opposed to more traditional methodologies based on the natural sciences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Lather, 1986; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992). From the point of view of qualitative research, what appears particularly problematic is that analytical categories resulting from natural science research have often been mistaken for social facts. Qualitative research approaches, such as narrative inquiry and hermeneutics, may expose limitations that result from rigid categorization and abstraction of human experience. As Grumet (1988) suggests, in qualitative research, "categorical meanings are suspended [in order to deepen understanding of the] dialectical interplay of our experience in the world and our ways of thinking about it" (p. 67). From this point, as Grumet suggested, it is possible to consider the interplay between the individual and the world as we know it.

If I look beyond the citations I have just given to the spaces between them, I see caught there the age old debate between experiential and scientific knowledge. My carefully chosen citations become soldiers who champion experience over science. That I feel the need to defend experiential knowledge is not surprising given what Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1993) suggest: "In our present world science is so dominant that we give it the authority to explain even when it denies what is most immediate and direct — our everyday, immediate experience" (p. 12).

The privileging of scientific knowledge over personal experiential knowledge has a long and complex history, dating back to Bacon, Descartes and Locke, who established the theoretical roots of the "modern" era (Borgmann 1992). Borgmann notes that "we can think of modernism as the conjunction of Bacon's, Descarte's and Locke's projects, as the fusion of the domination of nature with primacy of method and the sovereignty of the individual" (p. 25). Descartes' *Discourse on method* (1637), in particular, argued for clear and precise measures for dispelling both superstition and religious dogma, the legacy of the medieval era. To this end, a rigorous method of science that privileged the rationality of the knowing subject, detached from the conditions of his subjectivity, was born. This way of thinking is now so deeply entrenched in our culture that it often goes unchallenged even in texts that purport to be about the subjectivism of interpretation. In their treatises on the embodiment of knowing, Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1993) attempt to move beyond this dualistic debate. They show us that in the West, two extreme views, that of scientific knowledge and of experience, have operated. They argue that the triumph of scientific knowledge over experience has resulted in disembodied thought.

The first of the two extreme views, that of scientific knowledge, is reminiscent of Descartes, whose project was to side-step our structures of understanding (prejudice and prejudgment) in favour of an objective, unbiased description. This world view is consistent with the objective positivist stance of contemporary science. The second, that of experience, is one of extreme subjectivism in which the individual mind constructs the world on its own in absence of other. One view searches for a recovery of what is "outer" — what is to be found in the world independent of the knower. The other view searches for a recovery of what is "inner" to the mind of the knower — what is created independently of an external world.

Varela, Thompson, Rosch (1993) enlist the view of the non-Western philosophical tradition of Buddhism, believing that Buddhism and its doctrines of nondualism may contribute to a less circumscribed view of self and society. In particular, these authors argue for a middle way between objectivism and subjectivism and look at knowing as a continuous oscillation between different modalities. In conducting this inquiry, I have adopted this point of view. I have moved back and forth from narrative to philosophical hermeneutics, and, as I state below, also to postmodernism. In my view, in any inquiry, the best we can hope for is to become aware of some of our views and purposes and the contradictions therein. I do not believe there is one best method for making meaning, although I believe it is important to employ suitable methods or principles depending on our research purposes. The world presents a variety of problems that challenge researchers to develop an informed perspective and a suitable method. This qualitative inquiry, which considers the interplay of the multi-aspected self with experiences of culture, requires a synthesized method of approach offering multiple perspectives which facilitates questioning of taken-for-granted notions.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

The notion of a variety of research methods and perspectives is distinctly postmodern. Postmodernism marks the beginning of a new era, one in which rationalism is no longer privileged, and allows for different ways of knowing. Postmodernism draws on the work of various thinkers such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Kristeva, and Rorty.

A change to postmodernism may not be without its own set of problems, as Rosenau suggests. Rosenau has difficulty with the nihilistic tendency of many postmodern theorists today and calls for an "affirmative" postmodern view that asserts life as "visionary and celebrating" rather than "apocalyptic and desperate" (Rosenau, 1992, p. 16).

What is important to this study, however, is the way postmodern thought challenges one best method and the notion of one true way of knowing, and offers instead an expansive creativity and multiplicity. Within the context of this inquiry, in order to adequately address the cyclical nature of the adult/child relationship, it becomes necessary to question the distinct classifications of "child" and "adult" from multiple perspectives and to consider the existence of alternative conceptualizations of experience — other ways of considering identity and knowledge.

Social, Political, and Ethical Considerations

A research text, like any text, is open to multiple interpretations. Therefore, research has the potential to become more than just comparing one point of view with another or one story with another. Research has certain social, political, and ethical, ramifications. Crites (1971) describes two narrative forms, sacred stories and mundane stories, that operate simultaneously, carrying cultural aspects of our experience forward. Sacred stories embody our taken-for-granted attitudes determined by the way our social context is represented to us. Sacred stories present the larger contexts in which mundane stories are told. Mundane stories point to, but do not overtly express the cultural sacred story. The mundane story furnishes the opportunity to examine what has been culturally constructed in an implicit way through the sacred story. Both sacred and mundane stories help us to understand that all of us are parts of a larger whole and, therefore, part of one another.

But do cultural sacred stories allow for multiple interpretations? Interpretation depends on how people are positioned in stories and on who has the power to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. This may be particularly relevant to my research, as women and children are major participants in my research process. Historically, in the West, the experiences of women and children have been filtered through the discourse of the patriarchy. This may be particularly problematic, because, for centuries, the language of the patriarchy has been the voice of authority in describing the experience of women and children. As Rich (1976) has said,

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men — by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. (p. 40)

The Subtext of a Sacred Story: Virginia Woolf as Author /Person

The story of Virginia Woolf shows how the cultural sacred story shapes the mundane stories of our lives. I have been troubled by what many literary critics had to say about Virginia Woolf's mental state. She is often described as having been insane (Kenney & Kenney, 1982; Novak, 1975; Showalter, 1985). However, the mundane stories told by my maternal grandmother made me skeptical of such an interpretation. My grandmother lived in the same Victorian England as Woolf. She told stories of her circumscribed life as a young girl. Early on, she became acutely aware of the intellectual privileges offered to her male siblings but not to her. Later, as a woman, wanting more for herself than the dubious honour of pouring tea for her father's wealthy clients, she escaped to Canada hoping for new adventure. As I listened to my grandmother speak, I questioned whether Woolf may have been "sane" in an "abnormal" social context that made her appear to be mad.

If we choose to examine Woolf's life from a slightly different perspective, we may begin to wonder if she was really insane and, if so, how this may have come to be. We may also examine who would benefit from such an interpretation, leading us to consider the conditions and circumstances in Woolf's life. Ultimately we may question more deeply how it is that Woolf became bridled with the term mad. More than anything, Woolf may be regarded as an intellectually gifted woman who was a threat to the patriarchy. Perhaps madness was a convenient label, one not only given to Woolf but often to those artists, both female and male, who pose a threat to a society's sacred stories. We have to continually question who benefits by interpretations, assumptions and knowledge systems. Weedon (1987) suggests that we "tackle the fundamental questions of how and where knowledge is produced and by whom, and what counts as knowledge" (p. 7). This is a common complaint, coming from both women and men and from the disenfranchised who are excluded by the dominant discourses of our times.

Most recently, directly related to educational issues, Gilligan (1982), challenged Kohlberg's moral developmental scale that places women at, and not beyond, his third stage of a six-stage sequence. Specifically, Gilligan challenged Kohlberg's universal claim to the domination of modern masculine morality. As Borgmann (1992) noted, Gilligan's book is "a crucial document in the critique of modernist universalism, . . . it has shown the universal to be particular" (p. 54). The story of Virginia Woolf, points to how cultural sacred stories are constituted. Researchers such as Gilligan, have challenged the fundamental structure of the cultural sacred stories. The significance of research such as Gilligan's is that it exposes the fundamental reality in which we all share. Such exposure makes it possible to closely examine places for change through social action.

In Search of Deeper Understanding

Without devaluing Varela, Thompson and Rosch's (1993) contributions to revisioning the relationship between science and experience, I am bothered by their polar map locating those who have made contributions to the field of cognitive science. The authors quite naturally refer to many of these contributors throughout their book. I find it problematic that women's contributions are all but absent, making the circle a rather androcentric one. This is ironic given that these same authors are calling for a more balanced and extended world view and given that Rosch is a woman. While my concern reflects my own bias, it also shows how difficult it is to transcend the accepted discourses of the day. My estimate that blind spots are inevitable in the most well-intentioned thinkers alerts me to question continually the assumptions of both myself and others. I find myself wanting to see more reflection on prejudices, an almost reflexive review of the conditions that shape what we say, speak, write, or are.

Gallagher (1992) says this well,

> Understanding a text involves building a complex series of bridges between reader and text, text and author, present and past, one society or social circumstance and another. These bridges have as their moorings the conditioning factors of interpretation; they are projected as possible interpretations defined by these conditions. (p. 5)

I could very easily and happily turn this chapter into a literature review but let me give one or two examples from my own life experience in teacher-education which speaks to the idea that all understanding is interpretation.

Throughout the dissertation, I have used italics to indicate stories, journal entries or any other writing of a personal nature. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of all participants.

On Multiple Perspectives: The Story of Anne

I had the pleasure of speaking to Anne, a student teacher who, after the age of forty, after having had children, after having tasted life in many places, and after having lived and loved a career in both music and architecture, decided on a new life challenge, teaching:

She said her choice became evident after teaching for a short while in a private school. Having a firm commitment, she enrolled in a teacher education program at an Ontario University. A mutual love for educational issues quickly engaged us in conversation. Anne enjoyed her student teaching experience, as she expressed it, "being with children is what speaks to my soul." Yet, after three student teaching experiences, she was puzzled by what she referred to as the "interpretational nature" of the curriculum and the "politics" therein. She went on to elaborate. In her first experience with *student teaching, her cooperating teacher was primarily concerned with multicultural issues and, to this end, Anne was expected to view and produce curriculum activities that reflected this world view. Her second experience was with a teacher who spoke of herself as an ardent feminist. Here, Anne learned to be careful to use gender neutral language. Her third experience was more mysterious. The teacher voiced no view on curriculum. However, Anne began to get the idea that "this teacher followed the party line." Anne acknowledged that, although the teachers' views were not so simplistic, nor so distinctly categorical, they were strong enough to lead her to question what her view of curriculum was and how this influenced her teaching. Thinking this was an important question, I pressed Anne to explain what she meant. She said that she could see some value in all three world views but she also felt she was becoming interested in a more holistic way of interpreting the world in relation to curriculum. She attributed this partly to her experience of living in different countries, and believed that each life experience had helped contribute to her understanding of what it meant to be human the world over. As a student teacher, Anne mentioned that she felt she had to hide her views of curriculum and how these views influenced her teaching. In learning to teach, she felt like she had to put her identity on hold to assume the role of student.*

Our conversation seemed to point to the importance of questioning just whose perspective we were speaking from as teachers and curriculum planners, and to the importance of multiple perspectives in our teaching practice.

Although I come to my understanding of curriculum in a slightly different way than Anne, I am also concerned with looking at curriculum from multiple perspectives. I am reminded of the following parable:

> Buddha . . . tells of a king who called together all the blind men in Savatthi and had them assemble around an elephant. Every one of them touched one part of the elephant's body, then they were asked about the animal's appearance. The king received various answers: "Those among the blind men who had felt the head of the elephant said 'Your Majesty, the elephant is like a cauldron.' Those who touched the ear said 'Your Majesty the elephant is like a shovel.' Those who felt the trunk said, Your Majesty, it is like the shaft of a plough.' This continued until finally they attacked each other with their fists, crying, An elephant is like this, not like that . . . (Mensching, 1971, p. 19)

Perhaps perspectives on the curricula, like the parts of the elephant, may only be understood in relation to the whole text. Perhaps understanding a whole text calls for tolerance of all perspectives. Hearing Anne's story reminded me of the importance of tolerance.

Returning to Gallagher's (1992) words quoted earlier, I am concerned with interpretation that will enable us to understand a text, a whole text, one that speaks to being in the world not in a divided way but in a more tolerant and connected way. As Gallagher points out, this means looking at the "conditioning factors of interpretation" and how these are "projected as possible interpretations defined by these conditions" (p. 5).

The Value of Other Points of View: A Narrative Hermeneutic Exploration

We can never be totally aware of every prejudice that shapes our interpretation. Perhaps the best we can hope for is insight into the way that we think it has come to be. This said, in this inquiry, I do not hope to escape from prejudice. I do, however, hope for awareness that will allow for a more conscious way of being present in the world. An example from my own story as classroom teacher may elucidate this point more clearly:

As a young teacher, I remember setting my classroom up in what I believed was a thoughtful manner. The classroom was set on the basis of some of the latest theories of education as well as on my own experience of being a student in the classroom. For example, I included a drama theatre and cozy nooks (things I desperately missed as a child in school). I was perplexed and somewhat bothered when I noticed that Del, one of my students, was spending most of her time at her desk doing math sheets. She didn't appear to be a very "social" child. Initially I ignored her response, thinking, "After all she is a rather linear, sequential learner." (I thought, "Didn't her lack of creative writing prove this to be so?") At first I let these thoughts go, only later to be bothered by them. Eventually I came to ask, "What is wrong with linear thought anyway? Why should not there be a place for linear thought?" I considered the source of my ideas about linear thought. I also considered where my ideas about being social had originated. Eventually I think I was able to look at some of the concepts that conditioned my prejudgment of Del. Upon more careful reflection, it became apparent to me that many of my own negative experiences with mathematics as a child were unconsciously seeping into my teaching practice. Furthermore, I began to reconsider the educational language used in theories of child development. This eventually led me to reconsider whether, in fact, theories of child development (such as those proposed by Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg) were based on adult interpretations of children's experiences rather than on the child's interpretations of his/ her experiences. I also began to consider just *how limiting these beliefs about child development were, not only for Del and for the other students, but also for me. I began to think more deeply about child development and the fundamental structure of its reality of which I also share, particularly as a teacher of young children.*

Perhaps this vignette about Del shows that prejudice may not always be self-limiting, providing we try to acknowledge what these prejudices might be and how they might have come about. While Del's story is about the need for appreciating differing points of view, it also provides insights, namely, our need to understand ourselves and the sacred texts by which we live. These more mundane texts speak to our lived experience and have the potential to challenge and open us to new perspectives of ourselves and our world. We need to acknowledge that there is much that we do not understand about ourselves and others and much we need to discover. The poet MacEwan (1969) puts it thus:

> . . . admit there is something you cannot name,
> a veil, a coating just above the flesh
> which you cannot remove by your mere wish
> when you see the land naked, look again . . .
> the moment when it seems most plain
> is the moment when you must begin again. (p. 30)

I believe the vignette about Del points to an exploration in education that is much needed, that is, an exploration into how our interpretations shape educational experiences, of both learner and teacher. I believe in continually asking in a reflective way how a particular understanding has come to be and what may condition its meaning. Perhaps doing so would make it possible to question the way we make meaning out of our knowledge, doing so in a way that is not divorced from life itself, but in relation to it. Failure to be self-reflexive may mean we are in danger of unknowingly reproducing universal claims about the nature of reality and, in this way becoming just another cog in the machinery of a system that privileges rational and objective ways of knowing.

By acknowledging their prejudices, teachers can develop points of awareness which enhance classroom practice.

Weaving Three Strands: Toward a Research Perspective

A single point of view is inadequate to understand the human condition. Rather, we need a multiplicity of views. Merleau-Ponty (1962) expresses the need for a multiplicity of views this way:

> Should the starting-point for the understanding of history be ideology, or politics, or religion, or economics? Should we try to understand a doctrine from its overt content, or from the psychological make-up and the biography of its author? We must seek an understanding from all these angles simultaneously, everything has meaning, and we shall find this same structure of being underlying all relationships. All these views are true provided that they are not isolated, that we delve deeply into history and reach the unique core of existential meaning which emerges in each perspective. (pp. xviii- xix)

Merleau-Ponty's words remind me that deeper understanding of myself and others may be possible through discovering a multitude of meanings not in isolation from, but in relation to, one another, the autobiography of the author notwithstanding.

It is my hope that these many texts, the ones I am writing, as well as the ones I am reading and interpreting, will create a narrative that both unfolds and enfolds. To accomplish this, my research process consists of several interconnected strands. The first involves an investigation into the major theories of child development, especially those that focus on the processes of identity formation. Simultaneously, I have gathered information about children's and adults' interpretations of their educational experiences. To this end, I am strategically positioned as both a teacher of elementary children, and as an instructor of adults in a preservice education program, as well as being a student in a graduate program of studies. I am thus situated in the midst of both children's and adults' experience's with schooling. This allows me to engage in informal interviews with children and adults and to move back and forth between children's and adult's interpretations. A final interconnected strand involves my attempt to generate a new way of understanding child development and identity formation through the interpretive lens provided by a deeper understanding of schooling events. The tension created by the multifaceted nature of my research and reflection on it helps me become more insightful of those notions that are still dominant but may need to be shed, or at least examined, in order to gain a better understanding of ourselves and others. I remain mindful of each strand as I move through the experience of living in the world and being of that world.

CHAPTER 2

Picking Up Strands of the Web

> . . . looking back at your life, you will see that moments which seemed to be great failures followed by wreckage were the incidents that shaped the life you have now.
>
> (Campbell, 1991, p. 38)

Questions continue to develop out of a sense of wonder. I am left with a sense of disembodiment and the knowledge of the abyss within. "If knowledge be power, it is also pain" (Emerson, 1983, p. 39). I look back, seeking to know where each strand of the web has left a trace.

My Brother Enters the Abyss

I loved my brother Michael more than anything else in this world. We were only a year apart in age . . .

He had eyes of china blue. They were big and wide and sparkled with explosive energy like firecrackers in the night. His hair was yellow and feathery-soft like duck down. He was small for his years. He had a slight limp. His one withered arm was like a little wing that he used expressively, especially when he played soccer. He had a slight English accent like our grandparents. His smile was often mischievously twisted. Yet, he was honest and cuddly and he loved easily.

Then Michael was diagnosed as epileptic. We watched him slowly lose ground. Tying shoelaces and doing buttons became insurmountable tasks. He lost the ability to *read and write but not to speak. This is the way I remember my little brother before he was institutionalized.*

There are those moments which change a being. Seeing my brother in an institution for the first time, when I was ten, changed my life . . .

I remember the morning that I first went to see him. The air was crisp with all the dying smells of autumn. I remember being told to look at the trees on the hills, but I didn't like looking at them. They seemed like old withered men dressed up for their own funerals. My mother smoked, dragging all the strength she could muster out of every last cigarette. My father didn't say much, his eyes only watching the road dead ahead. All too soon, we were there. The building that lay before us was Michael's new home.

Feeling anxious and tense, I peered through the window of the car. Michael's new home had high windows and a large front door. There was a playground with one seesaw; the wind whistling a melancholy tune on its pipes.

The door opened and when it echoed shut again behind me I felt as if I'd been swallowed whole. I immediately smelled the stench of urine. My stomach did a quick turn and then adjusted to the assault on my nostrils. There were children everywhere, some wearing hockey helmets or other protective garb. Then a large crowd of them, some young, some older, came pouring around us, pecking like birds, trying to get a tender bit of attention. I wanted to scream but I desperately concentrated on the bare walls. The furniture was sparse; there were a few assorted toys. The attendants had smiles that were starched and as put on as their uniforms.

Then I saw my little brother. Not knowing what to do, I watched my parents. They seemed as small and powerless as I felt. It took me a while before I could focus on Michael's eyes. They were still large, but now they appeared almost too large. They made me think of the vacant windows mirroring the blank expression of the bare *institutional walls. Looking at my brother, I felt violated. Part of me was now dead, as dead as my brother's eyes had now become.*

The story I have just revealed is a very personal one. My primary reason for sharing it is to describe the path of one strand on my autobiographical landscape.

As human beings it seems possible that we all have multiple vantage points which we come to, points from which we interpret our view. In any human being there is the potential for many vantage points, viewed from many paths and forming many selves from the intricacy of woven strands.

This story is written through the eyes of a ten year old child. This child is a part of myself that is most often concealed behind a more worldly adult image. This more worldly image is the side I show to the outside world and yet I am also aware that even this side has multiple dimensions. This is an arbitrary point, however, if there is little place given to explore and experiment with the multiple dimensions of who we are. What appears to be less explored is the cyclical nature of our identity, particularly the interactive nature of the child/adult dimensions which constitute each of us.

Although my vantage points are complex, and dynamic, always shifting as I continue, they serve as a compass, situating and guiding not only why I write about what I do, but what and how I write. Seeing my young brother in an institution, while I was very young turned my certainty and security upside down. The impact the experience had on me has never truly diminished. It lifted the veil with which our culture hides the truth and showed me the puppet's strings, making me curious as to who pulls the strings, who makes the puppets dance. It is because of this experience that I was, am, and forever will be plagued with those questions that hide in the light. This experience made me suspicious of those in power, and leery about aligning myself too closely with one or another camp of thought. It made me take notice of the way we treat people of difference, and of the way our focus on difference instead of similarity may lead to a sense of alienation not just for those who are the target of alienation but ultimately for us all.

My brother entered the abyss, and I stepped into it for a moment. Here was an abyss, a time/space which resonated "with the voice of those whose chance for life has been aborted by concentration of power bent on holding them in check" (Caputo, 1987, p. 286). My brother's chance for life was connected with more than the voices of those whose smiles were as starched and as put on as, their uniforms.

However, Caputo's image of the abyss as measureless space, a space where we are abandoned "to the measureless [where we experience] our lack of a fixed point from which to take its measure" (p. 287), is an image which is familiar to me.

A veil was lifted. I looked into the measureless, the unbounded, and concentrated on the bare institutional walls. I began on another path, seeking to know who pulls the strings and who makes the puppets dance. There is danger in the abyss. There is also "openness to the mystery" (Caputo, 1987) if we are willing "to stay in play with the play. The question is whether and how, hearing the movement of that play, we are able to join in it. The play is all" (Caputo, 1987, p. 293).

In Play With the Play

As I read the research written by others, I often wonder who is the questioner behind the words. Where is the researcher in the process and what is her or his intent in doing the research? Does she/he take into account her/his own prejudices? Does the researcher present her or his interpretation as an objective description, as in the words of Nicholson "like a view from nowhere," (1990, p. 9). I often wonder when I listen to myself and others speak and write who it is that is speaking and writing the words I hear.

Each of us seems to speak in many different voices. Sometimes I think we merely mouth cultural clichés. Sometimes I attach a label to what I hear. I say: "This sounds like feminist thought and/or postmodern thought"; "conservative" or "radical" thought. Sometimes what I hear appears to be monolithic; at other times it shows traces from all over the interpretational map.

To show my interpretational standpoint, I shared one story from personal experience. More than any other experience, this one has left an indelible impression on my life. This experience, shaped, and continues to shape, my interpretational gaze.

Emotional and the Personal

Emotions have often received much bad press. They are regarded as negative sensations, to be avoided at all costs. Yet emotions are an essential and unavoidable part of who we are. In education, brushing emotion aside is easy, especially given that "[i]n teaching and in all learned professions it is a justifiable source of pride to be scientific in one's approach to things" (Jersild, 1955, p. 51). Yet, many writers such as Eisner (1991), Jagger & Bordo (1990) and Trapedo-Dworsky & Cole (1996) recognize that vulnerability and uncertainty may be friends rather than foes in a discourse for a deeper understanding of both ourselves and others. However, on much of the academic terrain I have travelled, it has been my experience that any display of vulnerability, uncertainty or any other emotion often calls forth labels as weak, base, unscholarly. Oakley (1981) expresses best why this may be so,

> While everyone has feelings, our society defines cognitive, intellectual or rational dimensions of experience as superior to being emotional or sentimental . . . Through the prism of our technological and rationalistic culture, we are led to perceive and feel emotions as some irrelevancy or impediment to getting things done. (p. 40)

Yet many courageous women and men have shown the power of vulnerability and uncertainty in the search for human understanding. Rich (1976) reveals the place of vulnerability in her writing process, ". . . for many months I buried my head in historical research and analysis in order to delay or prepare the way for the plunge into areas of my own life which were painful and problematical, yet from the heart of which this book has come" (p.xviii). Greer (1986) speaks to the power of uncertainty. Greer, when living with some of the poorest peasants in Europe, found that "those three months destroyed all my certainties and taught me the reality of the pluralism I had always argued for intellectually and never really understood" (p. xiv).

In educational research I also learned to be suspicious of my own experience and understanding as legitimate knowledge in favour of a more dispassionate, objective approach. My graduate research journal written in 1991 best captures these sentiments :

> *I have always had a haunting, sad, feeling deep within, resting dormant in a cloud of unease, hovering back and forth in silence, in shadows.*
>
> *One day I hear a voice. It sounds hollow, pretentious, didactic. I have now become the trained master, an expert researcher, someone with an acceptable and yet unapproachable voice.*
>
> *The surface has worn thin.*
>
> *I sit and cry because I know that voice is mine. Why am I so tightly bound by silence? Perhaps I have been conditioned to disown my emotions not only in academic life but in other areas of life as well.*

What do we lose in teaching and in educational research when we insist upon seeing emotion as the enemy of rational thought?

We may trap ourselves in dualist thought that separates reality into pairs of opposites. This practice is "so deeply entrenched in our culture that we tend to think of dualities not as culturally dependent beliefs but as essential, God-given principles of reality" (Monteath, 1993, p. 5). Such dualistic thinking may be traced back to modernist epistemology which sees true knowledge as that obtained through the application of rational thought.

Not only do we divide thought into rational/irrational but this either/or thinking leaves its imprint on other dualities such as the theory/practice divide. Compartmentalizing ourselves in this way results in the fragmentation of being. A compartmentalized existence is typical of life in our culture. What is to be gained by abandoning a non-emotional perspective in research? Can emotion be a virtue in research? Kierkegaard wrote that "The conclusions of passion are the only reliable ones" and "What our age lacks is not reflection but passion" (Kierkegaard in Kaufmann, 1956, p. 18). And yet, lest we forget, Hitler was a passionate speaker who launched a passionate campaign. In championing the role of emotion, I, therefore, call for the licence to both think and feel in our institutions of learning while at the same time being ever watchful of dangerous campaigns and dangerous solutions.

Although value-free thought, quickly said, seems to suggest detachment and absolute objectivity, all of us interpret from the vantage point of our values and beliefs, be they political or philosophical. We all make prejudgments that condition what we experience, what we describe, and what we interpret. Dewey (1966/1916) said "we do not anticipate results as mere intellectual onlookers, but as persons concerned in the outcome, we are partakers in the process which produces the result" (p. 102). Notwithstanding what Dewey said, many educational researchers believe that research should be free of the prejudgments of the researchers. Some educational research even claims to be unbiased. That this is so reflects the widely held assumption that it is not only possible but in fact desirable to remove all subjectivity from the research process. But the researcher's subjectivity is an inevitable component of the research process, and it is foolish to think a researcher can somehow, magically, stand outside the process. The choice of one research topic against another, the research questions asked, the conceptual framework used, the constructs explored, the style of the presentation as well as personal style, all reflect and reveal the subjectivity of the research. Such contemporary researchers as Kirby and McKenna (1989) also remind a researcher to be cognizant of this "conceptual baggage" that inevitably shapes the research process. They suggest this may be done by looking at how one's experience contributes to or informs the research process. Later, they suggest that when this self-reflection happens, a researcher becomes "another subject in the research process and another dimension is added to the data" (p. 53). As a researcher, I must continually pose questions to myself regarding the relationship between myself and my research. In this way, I can bring emotion to the research in a reasonable way.

Philosophical Viewpoints in the Inquiry

I think my curious and somewhat suspicious nature has its roots in my story of personal experience, shared earlier. Perhaps it is also understandable why in addition to narrative inquiry and hermeneutics, I should also be drawn to existentialism.

Existentialism is not a philosophy, nor a school of thought reducible to any set of tenets, but rather a label for many different revolts against traditional philosophical thought (Kauffman, 1956, p. 11). At heart, existentialism may captivate any man or woman who refuses to "belong to any school of thought," is suspicious of the "adequacy of any body of beliefs," and shows "a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic and remote from life" (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 12). Because the revolutionary nature of existentialism is similar to both postmodern and feminist thought, I find myself drawn to all three movements. I am always somewhat hesitant (although I do it readily enough) to assign individual thinkers to any one general movement, wondering whether they would appreciate the company or camp that they have been made to keep or are described as. There are many ideologies that describe feminism and postmoderism. I am, therefore, reluctant to slot myself into any one academic or philosophical pigeon-hole, whatever its label. Rather, I am appreciative of those human beings, who can, as Einstein said, "see with their own eyes and feel with their own hearts" (Einstein, 1984, p. 50). For me, this means there are many teachers and many diverse fields of study in which to learn. My teachers are thus many and varied. They range from Virginia Woolf (master at writing both the informal and formal essay), Mckenzie and Christopher (two children who have taught me much about life), and my father (master at examining two opposing thoughts at once while still honouring the simplicity of life itself). My own experience and reflection on it has also been my teacher. I believe self-understanding is an important component of the research process, notwithstanding that it is hard work to "rethink" who we are and how we relate to each other and society. In addition to these personal influences a number of philosophical/thinkers have contributed to my thinking. These various philosophers/thinkers explore the need for careful examination of the structure of knowing and who we are in relation to the world.

Rethinking Who We Are

By chance, I touch upon one of my favorite books containing the letters Rilke (1992) has written to a young poet. I have not read far when I find "go within and scale the depth of your being from which your very life springs forth"

(p. 7). These words of Rilke seem wise. They beckon me to begin near, with what is close at hand, with myself and my own unexamined assumptions. Yet, when I read Rilke, I experience familiar feelings of discomfort at the thought of peering within. When I examine these feelings I wonder: Have many of my waking hours been spent skimming the surface of things? Do I seek the security of superficiality, rather than ask the questions that open the way to what Caputo (1987) has called the "abyss within" (p. 269). As Levin (1985) has pointed out, most of us are so caught up in our everyday world that we do not question very deeply our understanding of Being. Levin says that we are born with the gift of a rudimentary pre-understanding of Being-as-a-whole but both the world in which we live and "our own inveterate tendencies stand in the way of our access to an authentically lived ontological understanding" (p. 12). Yet avoid it as we might, the question of who we are is always before us.

This question of who we are as Beings-in-the-world is central to this study. Largely unexamined notions of self do much to determine the way we educate our children. In a sense, through the education we provide them, we are shaping their Being in the world, and either facilitating or standing in the way of authentically lived ontological understanding (of Being). However, before I look at how we know our Being-in-the-world, I want to look at "knowing" itself.

The Structures of Knowing

How do we know what we know? The Enlightenment said we know through Reason. As children of the Enlightenment, we have inherited the myth that we can reason our way out of confusion. Yet the supremacy of Reason itself needs to be called into question (Flax, 1991, p. 10). The father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, was one of the first Western philosophers to provide a critique of Reason as the supreme way to know reality. His phenomenology examined the structure of experience itself. Husserl showed how the consciousness of the subject-knower (intentionality) is all-important in knowing the world. In *The Question of the Other,* Peperzak (1989), takes up the problematic concept of Husserlian phenomenology of intentionality (the structure of experience itself) as critiqued by Levinas. Husserl contributed much to our understanding of human experience; however in trying to examine the structure of our consciousness of the world, our experience becomes fixed, reduced, obscured. "In a way, its meaning is not given, but rather imposed" (Peperzak, 1989, p. 6). Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) speak to the irony of Husserl's procedure "although he claimed to be turning philosophy toward a direct facing of experience, he was actually ignoring both the consensual aspect and direct embodied aspect of experience" (p. 17).

In Husserl's phenomenological reductionism, it is not the things themselves that are so clearly revealed but the conditions, relations, and perspectives reified through language. Perhaps this shows the difficulty with the elusive nature of language in both bringing us back to lived experience and making it say what we intend. As Merton (1972) said, "When we say what a thing is, or what we are doing, we think we fully grasp and experience it . . . Verbalization — tends to cut us off from genuine experience and to obscure our understanding instead of increasing it" (p. 36).

To sum up then, Husserl claimed his phenomenological reduction helped us know reality directly, but instead, by applying his method, we get to know the conditions, relations, and perspectives of reality. Part of the problem is that the language Husserl uses, and that we all must use, not only enables us to describe reality, but it also pushes reality away from us. Instead of knowing directly, we know it through words. And words impose a "stop-action" on events that are continually on the go. In our minds — the intentional world — we can stop-action, but not so in the extensional world. Perhaps this is why the arts are so important in our lives. We do not know reality/experience directly through the arts either. But we do know reality/experience differently through the visual arts than we do through language.

As children of the Enlightenment, we may equate the language of Reason with the purest description of reality/human experience. Certainly words shape our experience. In a very real sense, we are born into a scripted society, a society which is shaped and which shapes us through structures based on a literate understanding of the world. Through questioning what we consider knowledge to be, through discovering who created that knowledge, through analyzing the concepts and rules used to make meaning and determine whose experiences are valid for knowledge-making, we may come to understand the scripts by which we live and can perhaps change if we so choose.

If our knowledge does little more than specify 'the categories in which the significance of one's life must be contained' which is what Reason sometimes does, then Reason, logos, is not enough. It fails to help us understand ourselves and others in a richer and more compassionate way.

Krishnamurti helps us to "think" further on these things. Krishnamurti (1967) said, "To think about the problem is not to understand. It is only when the mind is silent that the truth of what is unfolds" (p. 41). I think it would be a mistake to suggest that Krishnamurti renounces thinking. To do so would only perpetuate dualistic thought that he claims is so prevalent in Western thought.

Instead, I think Krishnamurti points us back to the knowledge of the body to complement the knowledge acquired through Reason and language.

Modern History may be written in absence of the body. As Berman (1990) says, "History gets written with the mind holding the pen" (p. 110). Perhaps to understand more deeply involves a shift towards all history being written by (the mind of) the victors.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962) is often credited with adding great dimension to our thoughts on Being. What might be central to his thinking, Nietszche-like in character, is primarily thus: tradition has fought to suppress the life and truth of the body. Of relevance to this study are Heidegger's three dimensions of embodied human existence: the period of the infant, in which we enjoy primordial understanding; the period of the adulthood in which we may become disconnected from the material world; and the period of maturity in which we may regain a deeper sense of Being. These are not necessarily sequential stages but can be, rather, simultaneous ones. Perhaps more than any other book, Heidegger's *Being and Time* opens the discourse on Being. Also of central importance to this study is its argument that knowing and being cannot be separated. As I read the later Heidegger, he not only realizes the importance of pre-understanding as a way to deepen our awareness of our experience, but he seems to be calling for the integration of knowledge of Being with our everyday existence.

If we develop a Heideggerian understanding of Being through allowing our minds to be silent in the Krishnamurti sense, then what shall we do with our new understanding? To understand something in a deeper and more meaningful way may mean a call to action. This does not mean that we simply acknowledge the social and political nature of human Being but that we act on this deeper understanding to change ourselves and society. This may mean we have to abandon many of our daily habits and socially prescribed behaviors. We must simultaneously remember who we are as human beings and call into question what being human means. This may make us feel extremely vulnerable.

But vulnerability does not necessarily make us weak—it can make us strong. Through vulnerability we may begin to become more whole. In this way, we may confront the conditions that bind us, that keep us living the unexamined life. Caputo (1987) suggests this to be a possibility, and pays homage to Meister Eckhart as one of the great masters of disruption. Caputo claims that through disruption one is automatically thrown into the discomfort of having to think through and also against the "grain of everyday conceptions" (p. 268). Caputo, not unlike Rilke, calls us to use this disruption to enter that place he refers to as the "abyss within," wherein through a scrutinization "of our mundane existence the flux is exposed, where the whole trembles and the play irrupts" (p. 269).

Signposts to the Text

In chapters 1 and 2, I briefly explored what I believe to be important considerations related to doing this research. I asked: As researchers, are we conscious of our cultural, historical, and gendered set of values? As often happens, these opening questions lead to other, related questions. I therefore also ask: How might these values help to further particular social and political views? Is a particular line of thought enabling or disabling for some members of society and not others? Is there the possibility for furthering critical thought between those who tell their stories and the other? I explore these questions more deeply, believing them to be linked to larger concerns such as the social, political, and ethical dimensions in the research process.

As I mentioned, I find any form of domination oppressive. As a woman, I work within an education system that more often than not is dominated by out-dated traditions and rules. Yet, I have at times been a willing accomplice in perpetuating the domination of such thought. I suspect that many men and women feel as if they have done likewise. This suspicion comes from my experience and from the work of many theorists in education who are searching for ways to open conversations about the construction of knowledge and question its status in our culture (Code, 1991; Giroux, 1991; Lyotard, 1984). My suspicion also comes from the many expressions I have both witnessed and participated in for the sake of socialization of both boys and girls in our culture. I shall never forget the sight of my six year old brother when he buried his doll to live a socially acceptable existence. Nor shall I forget a female colleague who labelled a grade five boy "an immature sissy" because girls were his primary companions. And, of course, I shall never forget the little girl who asked me why is it that I (her teacher) often called on boys to answer questions in our math class when "girls know the answers too".

It is my hope that this research remain an open dialogue for all who care to share in it. Caputo (1988) speaks to such a possibility, suggesting participation in a dialogue that enables us to consider many possible alternatives through an awareness of the construction of language in and through relations with other:

> Language arises from plurality, from the difference between us, so that to listen to someone else is always to be instructed, that is, to hear something which is not our own. The idea is not to bring all discourse under the rule of reason, of the universal which extinguishes particulars, which would eventually be to silence everyone, but to keep the lines of communication open, for there can be no end to the novelty and otherness that arises when people get together. (p. 69)

As Merleau-Ponty (1962) has written "We don't lose the life of curiosity as long as we keep the question before us, who are we?" (p. 81). For me this means being more conscious of who we are in relation to others.

CHAPTER 3

Search for Consciousness: Out of Silences

I became most acutely aware of my own search for consciousness when in 1990, I came upon the book,*The Drama of the Gifted Child* (originally published as *Prisoners of Childhood*) by Swiss psychologist, Alice Miller. Miller's (1990a) work urges us to address the near dearth of educational writing on the personal experiences of children within educational contexts. Her research on childhood is seminal; however, it is the vulnerability offered through her own story of childhood that begs us to re-evaluate our conscious identity and its meaning.

Through her own childhood story, Miller (1990a) shows that a search for consciousness may be akin to an "escape from the labyrinth of self-deception and self-accusation" (p. ix). For Miller, this 'self-deception' and 'self-accusation' broke down when she was able to recognize those limiting belief patterns that had become a barrier to understanding her own life. Certainly for Miller, the break with these limiting beliefs began the process of her own liberation. This process proved to be an arduous task spanning some fifteen years. In many ways, it was a never ending process, storied through Miller's many books. Miller's own words (1990a, p. xii) best capture this process:

> I was amazed to discover that I had been an abused child . . . My discovery also showed me the power of repression, which had kept me from learning the truth all my life, and the inadequacy of psychoanalysis, which even reinforced my repression by means of its deceptive theories.

Miller recognizes the abstractions filtered through the study of philosophy, as well as her training in psychoanalysis, as being barriers, denying truths buried in her personal history.

Bateson (1994), in her book *Peripheral Visions,* elaborates on a similar theme of needing to overcome the presuppositions our culture has imposed on us. Bateson encourages us to cast aside familiar learning habits and explore our discomfort, those places of disruption of the usual that often occur on the periphery of our lives. Bateson tells how this may happen. She states that our "experience is structured in advance by stereotypes and idealizations, blurred by caricatures and diagrams" and when we have experiences not explained by those stereotypes and idealizations, we feel discomfort and disruption (p. 5). Bateson helps us to understand why we must look at our patterns of knowing as well as the importance of anthropological examination. Anthropology shows us lives and cultures that depart from the usual. She sees anthropology as the study of the way other cultures disrupt what we take for granted. Bateson encourages us to view the unfamiliar as a challenge rather than as a threat to our well-being. By embracing disruption we may experience life in a fuller and richer way.

Plunging Into the Abyss

> To go within and for hours not to meet anyone — that is what one needs to attain. To be lonely as one was lonely as a child, with adults moving about, entangled with things that seemed big and important, because the grownups looked so officious and because one could not understand any of their doings — that must be the goal. And when you realize one day that their activities are superficial, that their careers are paralyzed and no longer linked with life, then why not look at the world as a child would see it — out of the depths of your own world,

> out of the breadth of your own aloneness, which is itself work and rank and career? (Rilke, 1992, p. 54)

My preoccupation with the need to be more conscious of who I am as an adult in relation to children, guides me to meet with initial perceptions, namely childhood realities that are both the foundation for, and the topic of, this inquiry. These childhood realities carried deep inside me are old, yet almost too familiar, now layered, nestled inside, becoming a part of who I am as an adult. It is my hope that this research will continue to push me into those silent places that may, paradoxically, become the place from which I speak. If I fail to address my discomfort and the conditions surrounding it, then I remain complicit with the monolithic approach to meaning embedded within a curriculum of which, when I was a child, or as a woman or as a teacher I have never felt to be a part. It is the discomfort because of these three identities, wedded within me that begs me to question, to reach into the silence created by the epistemology within which I grew up. It is also this discomfort, ever-present, that outlines the places within which I begin my inquiry. I come face to face with the abyss within, the silent, empty place given to me as a child by a society that told me not only how to think, but what to think.

Within the silent abyss, close to my own heart, I begin to recognize one of the sources of my difficulties with education. Here too is the space of possibilities opening out of the measureless abyss. To recognize the source of difficulties and the possibility of a path opening from that source, is to name this struggle, to name the fight for my own voice coming out of the measureless abyss. My own pen that long ago surrendered to some other authorities, creates text.

I believe each of these authorities of my childhood, to varying degrees, overtly as well as covertly, through social patterning and conditioning, often renders children speechless. But where may the speechlessness end up if not in some fossilized form — the silent adult.

I have learned that silence may be a two-edged sword, both with the power to hide and the power to name. For many months I buried myself in the history of childhood and child development, considered and reconsidered my research approach, reread notes, and continued to read literature particularly as it relates to silence. My propositional knowledge seemed such that I could present a fairly good argument concerning my choice of method, and the source and significance of choice of topic. Although I felt confident intellectually, I also felt sad, angry, empty — the latter emotions, signaling to me the fact that mine was an arid intellectualism. In response, I began to try and find theorists whose work served to make legitimate the place of feeling in academic work, a subject introduced in Chapter 2. No longer able to avoid the awkward silence of my own childhood (as an adult I believe I had become hardened to this silence), eventually I took a reflective turn toward young children, both the child I once was, and those I taught as an adult. If one is in the body most of the time then there is no reason to run from the silence of the void (Berman, 1990, p. 20). Stripped of my props, my ordinary surroundings, my books, my role as teacher, the theories I have learned to hide behind, I sank back into the pages of my journal, to touch the slippery wings of silence:

I remember walking with Ashraf on a cold, snowy, winter day and in our walking there was silence, silence as sharp as a razor's edge. I remember Ashraf piercing the silence commenting that we had come a very long while *without saying a word. This behavior, he noted, did not seem to be typical of life as he had come to know it in North America. We talked about what silence reveals and conceals.*

These thoughts, from my journal, are from a long time ago. Perhaps questions that live between language and silence never leave but, like all things that really matter, they resurface. As Berman (1990) says:

> It is as though silence could disclose some sort of terribly frightening Void. And what is being avoided are questions of who we are and what we are actually doing with each other. These questions live in our bodies, and silence forces them to the surface. (p. 20)

Silence may have different levels of intensity and yet, as Berman says, certain situations "echo the lessons learned in our bodies from childhood . . . they are microcosms of our entire civilization" (1990, p. 20). Seeing my brother for the first time in an institution is an experience that will always stay with me. Like any event that has the power to disrupt a life, it first jelled and then became indelibly fixed in my mind. I believe it is this incident that points to the silence inside of me, yet, the circumstance with my brother is not merely individual and private but an experience that I believe encapsulates the lessons we learn through growing up in Western society.

A volume of wide-ranging articles, *Reclaiming the Inner Child* (1990), helps lay bare these lessons of childhood. However, more important and yet closely intertwined with my experience of growing up in our Western society, this book challenges us to reclaim an inner sense of who we are. The authors suggest this sense inevitably becomes lost to us in childhood. The authors also contend that in all cultures one's identity is heavily conditioned by what happens in childhood; childhood is the place in which suffering begins, and is the reason suffering remains with us. No one escapes childhood unscathed. Miller (1990b) suggests, in an essay in the aforementioned book, that life is full of myths and illusions "because the truth would often be unbearable" (p. 126). She then goes on to say that there is always pain before we realize a new level of personal truth. But if we shy away from the pain, we may have no option but to content ourselves with the conceptual thought of others. We could, for example, read Freud about other people's painful experiences. "But then we [would] remain in the sphere of illusion and self-deception" (p. 127). Miller points to the fact that we manage to survive suffering by creating illusions and myths by which to live. We may need to choose our myths and illusions carefully for some may be better to live by than others.

The Lost World of Feelings: To Be Nobody

When I looked into my brother's eyes so many years ago, it seems like part of me became lost in the horror of that moment. My words 'and part of me was dead, as dead as my brother's eyes had now become' best captures how I felt. It was as if in leaving my brother behind I became a nobody — a walking, lonely, abstracted being. It seems to me that being a no-body is not a problem peculiar to me alone. I have met many no-bodies so far in my journey through life. We live life at a distance from ourselves and others. I know this only too well.

In his *I and Thou*, the title of which I believe captures the essence of what it means to be human, Buber (1958) observes that relationships between human beings have become abstractions in our society. Instead of seeing the "other" as "thou," we see her/him as "it". Buber reminds us that the child knows of no separation of I and It. (It is interesting to note here, that "identity" is from the Latin "same as"). Is that why I felt as if I had lost part of myself, part of my body, the day I saw my brother slated to become a thing, locked behind the bars of an institution? Yet, perhaps as Rilke suggests, both children and adults pay a price in denying what the child knows intuitively — that there is no self without other in relation. Paradoxically, then, pain through alienation may serve a vital link to life. Pain forces us to feel the world, to come back to those feelings that have lost a home rather than to continue to be distanced from them. Pain may mean we come back into relationship with others. This may mean returning to the parts of ourselves that we have hidden from our conscious awareness, to the parts that know the fear of the world, the fear of each other, and the fear of death itself.

A turn to the body may mean a turn towards life in its full-bodied-aloneness. It may mean we face ourselves regarding the painful issues arising from the way we treat each other. This is why I feel that the most important questions are questions of the other. In essence, we may be trying to return to a more complete, less fragmented, sense of self. I feel this is only possible by being in relationship with others. Perhaps this is why certain truths appear unbearable. In a very real sense, the abyss within may actually be the unbearable gap between self and other.

It is therefore a special concern of this study to explore how the strands of self are constituted as we move through schooling experiences as child, adult, and teacher. This exploration is a quest for deeper understanding of the experience of self in relation to other human beings. More specifically, I hope it will develop out of the silences into an open conversation between child and adult and through schooling events. Through dialogue may come a more embodied sense of self.

CHAPTER 4

Self and Society, and the Multiple "I's" of Teacher Identity

> This above all–to thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.
> (Shakespeare: Hamlet 1. iii.)

How many times do we say "I am not myself today," "she is not herself today" or "you are not acting like yourself." What we find in the preceding statements, quite commonplace in our culture, are several pervasive assumptions regarding the self. We seem to take it as a given that we all have a self. But who is this self? What is this self? Furthermore, who are we, what are we, when we are not ourselves? I think of the injunction, 'to thine own self be true'. What is this self that we must be true to it?

The above statements imply that the self is a unified entity. In some cultures, however, there is no notion of a separate self, an 'I'. But there are many theorists in the West, such as Laing (1961) who assert the existence of an inherently existing self. Laing proposes a binary opposition of "true self/false self." In this construction, the true self is the inner, core self that endures unchanging and unchanged through the vicissitudes of life, while the false self is the layers of 'let's pretend', the social and public masks that we wear as

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A version of this chapter has been published. In M. Kompf, T. Boak, R. Bond & D. Dworet (Eds.). (1996). *Changing research and practice: Teachers' professionalism, identities and knowledge*. London: Falmer Press.

armour and disguise. When I spoke of being a 'no-body' in the previous section perhaps I, too, was subscribing to similar bipolar thinking about selfhood: I could either be a 'some-body' or a 'no-body'. I thought I was a 'no-body' because I lived at a distance from myself — but what was the self to which I lived at a distance? In looking for my core self, my true self, was I looking for a chimera?

Discourse such as Laing's (1961) on true and false selves suggests that there is a fixed distance between self and other. However, after revisiting the texts on the formation and nature of self, and after reflecting on my own experiences and on those of my research participants, I have come to think that self and other are not so rigidly and inflexibly located. The distance between self and other is not fixed. Sometimes it is greater, and self and other appear as two discrete entities; sometimes it is smaller, and self and other appear to be as one. The ostensible boundaries of the self — and, by extension, of the other - are always in a constant state of flux. To define the self as a discrete entity is to ignore the complexities of the I/thou dynamic and to preclude a more socially oriented notion of self.

In this fourth chapter, I explore in greater depth the cultural notions of self-formation and identity that underpin our pedagogy and our teacher training. By exploring selfhood as a process of social interaction we may be in a better position to understand the extent to which social norms both delimit and embrace who we are as children, as adults, and as teachers. Following this line of thought, I have called this chapter "Self and society and the multiple "I's" of teacher identity".

Setting the Context: Situating the Self

To provide a context in which to discuss processes of self-formation, I briefly survey the history of ideas about knowledge. It is not necessary to return to the historical and contemporary debates regarding the construction and nature of knowledge. Neither should it be necessary to elaborate upon the long-standing and deeply entrenched tensions between the reductionism of positivistic science and the holistic understanding of experience as knowledge-finding or knowledge-making activities. For our purposes, it is enough to point to them as existing. What is important for our task, however, is to point out that because we have so privileged scientific rationalism, its assumptions about the nature of true knowledge have permeated and continue to permeate our thinking on the nature of the self, and have made it difficult to gain an understanding of the nature of the self that resonates with our lived experience of ourselves. Until very recently, scientific inquiry has discounted context and discounted the mind-body connection and, thus, has ignored the contextual complexities of self-identity and its embodied nature.

This sense of disconnection and disembodiment has plagued us since Plato's *The Republic*. This inceptive work put forth the notion that cognitive activity could and should be separated from bodily awareness and activities. It promulgated the supremacy of rational thought, that is, "right reason" over embodied experience. The privileging of disembodied rational thought continued unabated through to the Enlightenment when it found its ultimate expression in the philosophy of Descartes. His dictum, "cogito ergo sum" encapsulates the notion that a capability for abstract reasoning is the hallmark of the true thinker and the true self. By extension, knowledge acquired through the application of abstract reasoning — the general principles and universal laws of mathematics and the pure sciences — becomes the one true knowledge. For over three hundred years, the Cartesian notions of self, 'Right Reason', and true knowledge reigned virtually unchallenged.

Recently, however, many thinkers have begun to address the problematic nature of disembodied thinking. Not only has it led to a repudiation of the knowledge of the body and of the embodied knowledge that is experience, but it has also encouraged us to see reality in terms of oppositions and not in terms of continuities. We see black and white, or true selves and false selves, some-bodies and no-bodies. Furthermore, we see no interconnection, no interdependence, between the discrete categories of black and white, true selves and false selves, some-bodies and no-bodies. We construct a world of "either/or" that precludes the possibility of "neither/nor but both". In so doing, we shortchange ourselves. As Capra (1982) states, "It is important, and very difficult for us . . . to understand that these opposites do not belong to different categories but are extreme poles of a single whole" (p. 35).

We also see knowledge (that is, the knowledge obtained through the application of 'Right Reason') and experience as two polar opposites. We then compound our folly by giving science "the authority to explain even when it denies what is most immediate and direct — our every day experience" (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch 1993, p. 12). And should our experience be at variance with the findings of our science, we think our experience and not our science is at fault. The self is one of the things we have looked to science for explanation. But the answers that we have received have not been satisfactory.

Scientific approaches to understanding the nature of the self, such as Watson's behaviorist theories of the 1930s, have largely ignored the embodied nature of the self. Almost from the time of its publication, Watson's behaviorist approach (Rachlin, 1994) drew criticism. Mead (1934) explored the mind-body dichotomy inherent in classical theories of self. In particular, Mead criticized Watson's behaviorism for trying to impose a structure on the self, and for delineating a single set of traits as constituting the basic substance of the self. Mead found both to be unacceptable. Mead posited self as process and not as a clearly defined and identifiable entity, unchanging through shifts in time and place: "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity" (Mead, 1934, p. 135).

I take two key points from Mead's work. Firstly, Mead disputes competing theories that view the self as substantive rather than an ongoing process of experience. Mead's emphasis on process recognizes the basic temporality of experience, experience that is grounded in life itself. The self is in process rather than in a static structure unrelated to time and space. More recently, Kerby (1991) suggests a person is conceived of as an embodied subject: "The self, as implied subject, appears to be inseparable from the narrative or life story it constructs for itself or otherwise inherits . . . it is from this story that a sense of self is generated" (p. 6).

Secondly, Mead views self as a social being and suggests human beings create meaning in their world through the process of interaction with other selves. Mead does not deny the factual existence of objects and events, but he maintains that the significance and meanings of those events and objects can, and do, change. For example, the fact that my grandmother immigrated to Canada does not change, but the significance and meaning of this event changes over time and according to the perspective of the person interpreting the event.

Other writers have also expressed the notion of the self as a social being. Taylor (1989) says, "A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (p. 35). Like Mead and Taylor, I believe that a sense of self develops through transactions between the person and the world, through the personal, cultural and historical aspects of a shared narrative. The whole receives its definition from the parts, and reciprocally, the parts can only be understood in reference to the whole.

A self that develops through transactions is a shifting, changing self inextricably bound to its context. Kerby (1991) tells us that "The self is a social and linguistic construct, a nexus of meaning rather than an unchanging entity" (p. 34). Merleau-Ponty (1962) similarly takes us beyond the modernist dualities of Watson to suggest that as human beings we are in the world but also of the world. "We are through and through compounded of relationships with the world" (p. xiii). The relationship between mind and body, body and world, returns us to life in the broadest possible way. These different aspects of our relationships are interconnected moments that can be separated only artificially for purposes of analysis. To separate is to abstract.

As Mead (1934), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Kerby (1991), and Taylor (1989) suggest, identity formation is an on-going process that involves the interpretation and reinterpretation of our experiences as we live through them. For this reason, focussing on transactive relationships rather than linear models might provide a deeper understanding of the multiple "I"s of teacher identity. Like Taylor (1989), I imagine many "sources of the self."

Sources of the Self

Along with Mead's theory of the self, Dewey's (1938) notion that the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience intercept and unite informs my understanding of teacher identity. Teacher identity is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others. Commencing with this section, by interweaving stories of my own and other people's experience, I now begin to articulate some of the relationships that shape self-identity. I illuminate various influences that shape teacher identity and I endeavor to understand factors that influence the continuous process of teacher identity. It is the simultaneity of these aspects which leads to the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted nature of teacher identity.

Atwood (1988) tells us:

> Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space . . . . You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away. (p. 3)

The three narrative fragments below have surfaced for me.

I never see my brother at school. At home we make potato bombs together. We share secret passwords and play, sometimes like contented kittens, sometimes like war mongers. But I never see my brother at school. He lines *up on one side of the school and I on the other. (I am the student, child of six.)*

I open the school door. It is massive, just as massive as the sinking feeling I always have when I get inside. If the walls could speak what would they say about the tone plastered upon them, neutral and sanitized, clean and quite respectable like me?" (I am the student teacher, the impostor.)

I walk into the school office. I see Christopher. He is standing in the corner, head hung low, body crumpled against the wall . . . . Time stands still, his eyes meet mine. I did not expect this "look" to sweep in from yesterday on the hands of today. Not three feet away, stands our school mission statement, it begins: WE RESPECT THE CHILD. *(I am the teacher, caught off guard.)*

In reflecting back and forth on these fragments, it is possible for me to make certain preconceptions, or theories and assumptions more explicit, thus opening the questions of how society, history and culture influence who we become as teachers. Doing this is consistent with Gadamer's (1991) notion of effective-historical consciousness in which an individual reflects on the historical and cultural forces that have made her or him. Through coming to know and understand those forces, one comes to know and understand her or his self in a more profound way. The individual comes to recognize that her or his cherished beliefs, values, and attitudes are not his or hers by choice but are given, or enculturated, by the historical and cultural context into which she or he is born. In reflecting on the historical-cultural, the individual comes to stand in a different relation to her or his society, and in being reflected upon, the society also changes. Historical consciousness thus brings an individual to a new understanding of self in relation to society. "Meaning is what understanding grasps in the essential reciprocal interaction of the whole and parts" (Palmer, 1969, p. 118). Having said this, I wonder about those patterns and parts that may never be named or understood.

Compliance to Stereotypical Images: A Given Role

The second fragment presented above beginning "I opened the school door . . ." portrays one of the feelings I had as a student teacher. Returning to school as teacher brought me in direct contact with those 'sinking feelings,' the ghosts of childhood agonies. Those childhood agonies were knocking on the door in some distant room but could barely be heard against the backdrop of child development models and theories I was being taught to absorb within the context of teacher education.

Margaret Olson shares a similar story of Susan, a preservice teacher. Susan entered her preservice education determined to help all children. Her focus on special needs students in particular was a reflection of her story of her younger brother's experience as a special needs student in elementary schools. One of Susan's preservice courses focused on assessment. As Susan learned all the theories that she initially imagined would enable her to help students like her brother, she began to feel a sense of discomfort. She could not make connections between the decontextualized theories that she was memorizing and any of her still very uncertain beliefs of how to interact with students. Her reckoning came the day she was required to go out to a school and do a reading assessment on a particular student. She had prepared carefully ahead of time in order to do the best job possible. However, she could make no connections between the objective, standardized test she was expected to administer and the child sitting in front of her. She described the actual situation to Olson as "sitting with an alien" (Olson, 1993, p. 131).

For Susan and for many other preservice, inservice, and university teachers there is a tension between personal knowledge of children (as in our own childhood histories) and the many objectivist models in teacher education. Clandinin and Connelly (1992, p. 368) suggest that a predominant mode of teacher preparation grows out of a long tradition of the objective construction of knowledge that leads to distanced ways of knowing, which also limits the ability of the teacher to see oneself as a curriculum maker.

I believe that the story of becoming a teacher begins early. As Mead's theories suggest, the present has meaning only as it relates to the past (history) and future (purpose). Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) illustrate how "teachers integrate their reminiscences of childhood and their present and future actions" (p. 36). They do so with a story, *Kindergarten Rebel*, told by Mark Connelly. Mark tells of being reprimanded by his kindergarten teacher for attempting to join the girls at the "kitchen table where the females of the class learned to serve tea and cookies like proper young ladies" (p. 37). He knew he would be allowed out of the "think box" if he could apologize convincingly enough. However, in this particular instance, when his teacher asked Mark if he had anything he wanted to tell her, he replied, "Yes. I don't think that it is fair that boys aren't allowed to play in the kitchen" (p. 37). He goes on to describe the situation that followed:

> *Confident that I held the high moral ground, I awaited a stimulating debate. Instead, a look of rage swept across my teacher's face as she spat out, "Young man, I thought that I told you to come back here and think about your poor behavior. Apparently, you did no thinking at all. You will spend the remaining hour of the morning right here, and I don't want to hear another word out of your mouth!" (p. 38).*

Now a high school teacher, Mark concludes that "looking back on it now, I realize what Mrs. McWilliams gave to me during that hour in the 'thinking box' -- an opportunity to contemplate my new role in life as a defender of gender equity" (p. 39).

Mark's story exemplifies that we are social beings and that preservice teachers' actions are neither tightly constrained by the past nor strictly determined by present circumstances. Rather, preservice teachers are creating their world while also being shaped by it.

One may wonder however, how preservice teachers will be free to act within their chosen profession, especially when traditional models of teacher education seem to be based on objectivist traditions that tend to sever mind from body, thereby eradicating bodily history or personal knowledge. Is it little wonder, then, that Susan felt like she was sitting with an alien? Was she not being forced to assume a role that was in many ways foreign to her? As Britzman (1991) suggests, perhaps this is because, the stereotypical images of the profession compel preservice teachers to 'take on' an identity more than construct one . . . "becoming a teacher may mean becoming someone you are not" (p. 4). When we assume an identity rather than construct one, we are approaching knowledge and understanding as "not-ourselves". We are in this way distanced from knowing and knowledge. To survive as a preservice teacher may mean to present oneself in a traditional, stereotypical way that does little to encourage "real" living relationships between human beings. Currently, the emphasis on following prescriptive epistemologies, based on behaviorism and cognitivism, shape our theories of teaching and learning (Noddings, 1992). I now turn directly to some of these theories to examine their influence on teacher identity.

An Unnatural Split Between Child and Adult Identity

One would be hard pressed to find a preservice or inservice teacher who cannot recite Piaget's stages of child development. While such stage theories may provide useful developmental indicators, they do little to help us understand the holistic significance or meaning of a child's actions and of a child's relationship to his/her world. Yet teachers rely heavily on stage theories. We use them to predict a child's academic progress and give us control over it. Our dependence on stage theories, I believe, causes us to ignore an organic relationship between child and adult. Kennedy (1986) speaks of the way in which so much education theory is "adultomorphic" taking some adult end-state as the norm toward which children should be socialized. A brief look at a class in child studies reveals that one of the upcoming films, *Breaking the child in,* focuses on reinforcers, punishment and training sessions, all based on socializing children into what many experts would regard as appropriate adult behavior. O'Neill (1989) also suggests that cognitive approaches to child development fail to recognize a 'living cohesion' "in which the embodied self experiences itself while belonging to this world and others, clinging to them for its content" (p. 50). Of particular relevance to self identity and teacher identity (the two are inseparable but I separate them here for purposes of analysis) is the way in which children have been storied socially, intellectually and culturally as being different from adults, despite the fact that we may know on a tacit level that there exists an indestructible connection between children and adults. Van den Berg (1975) echoes this sentiment:

> The child today has become separated from every thing belonging to the adult's life. Nowadays, two separate states of human life can be distinguished: the state of maturity, with all the very mature attributes belonging to it, birth, death, faith, and sexuality; and the state of immaturity, which lacks these attributes. (p. 32)

While these theories reflect and are reflected in cultural values and beliefs, ignoring the organic relationship between childhood and adulthood results in a compartmentalized self. Aries (1972) sheds further light on how this situation has come into being. In particular he speaks about the societal shift in education when children were separated from adults and sent off to schools to be educated en mass. Families were separated, and home and school became worlds apart. My first story fragment of lining up on the opposite side of the school building from my brother epitomizes this fragmentation. Individuals are not only separated according to particular characteristics (e.g. adult/child, male/female, white/black), but these categories also have different levels of status. This hierarchical framework is particularly problematic in regard to identity because it renders the child inferior to the adult. The child is always found to be lacking. I believe the hierarchy inherent in stage theories of development creates fragmentation both within ourselves and between ourselves and our students. An example of this hierarchical fragmentation from one's own past and one's students is shown in the following story told to me by a teacher/graduate student:

> *I went to the university library to copy a few articles. As I went through the turnstile to gain access to the library I noted just how unusually crowded the library was . . . . It occurred to me that the library was probably packed because of final exams. This sudden thought produced an odd feeling in my gut. I wondered why I felt such an intense feeling bubble up inside. It was dead silent. No visiting, just people sitting all alone, cramming and stuffing themselves with the appropriate knowledge to spit out later. I could not help remembering being in the same position as those 'poor students!' I wanted to leave as quickly as possible. I grabbed the articles and set to my task at the copy machine. That familiar smell of the photocopy machine transported me back to the time when I was teaching . . . . I was now standing in front of that machine as teacher. Strangely, I felt better. I would be the one giving the exam. (Cooper, 1995, p. 256)*

This story shows that, as the child moves towards becoming an "educated adult," the child is apprehended. Many theories of child development ask us to forget ourselves, and yet to understand who we are, we must pay attention to ourselves and to others in and through our relationships. In attempting to replace the self identity developed through the embodied history of the child with an imposed external reality, the pressure to conform may lead us to deny our sense of self identity when we perceive ourselves as separate objects.

When our sense of self becomes compartmentalized, relationships with others are damaged. Little wonder then that, as "teacher," I was caught off-guard and uneasy by the look on Christopher's face as he stood near that mission statement. Christopher's look reminded me that our relationship with children affects us just as we affect them. For me, the mission statement epitomized the lack of lived connection between adult and child in myself, in other teachers, and in developmental theories of self.

Through Christopher's look I realized we have lost our way. Yet despite my unease I, too, became complicit in the many theories and banal mission statements involving children that underpin our cultural stories. As Craig (1995) tells us, it is situations like this that "create the dilemmas that gnaw at my soul" (p. 24). Yet how could it be any different when for many teachers in training (and I use this word advisedly) the story in traditional teacher education programs is so akin to the childhood experience of school, that they may not question the need for the story to be any different. And often, even if they do question the need, there may be few opportunities to express their concerns.

Where Our Prescribed Role as Teacher Begins

Teacher identity is also embedded within the larger historical and cultural story of education. I shall now look at a brief history of education in North America, in gener[illegible] and Canada, in particular. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Canadian schools were viewed as "an important instrument of social cohesion — so necessary in an era of rapid change. It would bind the diverse social elements together with one set of values and political beliefs" (Titley & Miller, 1982, p. 58). When Canada became a nation in its own right in 1867, the schools became a crucial means for cementing a cohesive Canadian identity. Titley and Miller (1982) tell us:

> The new nation of Canada, a shaky amalgam of disparate entities unsure of its identity and future, looked to public education to forge a sense of unity and political loyalty. This was of particular concern in Ontario where the tactic employed was the 'Canadianization' of the curriculum. Yet the new English-Canadian nationalism did not undermine one of the original purposes of the school -- the inculcation of the Victorian puritan ethic. Canadian texts were equally redolent of a vigilant moralizing as those they replaced. Social stability remained a central aim of education and the concept of Canadian nationality was wedded to this. (p. 58)

Teachers were selected and trained to conform with this vision. This history has had a profound effect on the identities of all teachers: "So complete is the system, so carefully is every contingency provided for, that the observer . . . is apt to feel that its completeness is perhaps its greatest defect" (Wilson, 1982, p.88). Currently, Canada's multiculturalism policies espouse "pluralism, diversity, and variety, which, it is confidently maintained, are the essence of Canada's national identity" (Lupul, 1982, p. 211). Yet when this pluralism is focused at the level of individuals, "the pluralism rooted in ethnicity and thus the pluralism of language is ignored in the hope that it will somehow go away" (Lupul, 1982, p. 212). The following story told to Margaret Olson as part of a commentary (personal communication, February 14, 1994) by one of her students is a telling example:

Carla approached me hesitantly, saying she would like to talk about the difficulties she was having in completing her practicum journal. She wanted to become a teacher to help others share in the advantages she felt she could bring back to the reservation where many of her people lived. Carla had been *educated off the reserve in a white, middle class, English speaking environment where she had thrived. She wanted to share the things she had learned with Native students who lived on the reservation and whom she initially perceived as less fortunate than herself. She was tremendously excited about her practicum placement which was in a grade one Ojibwa immersion classroom. However, this experience brought terrifying questions of self-identity to the surface for Carla. It soon became apparent to her how fundamentally different the Native culture was from the culture in which she had been educated. She felt an overwhelming sense of loss when she realized that the grade one students were much more fluent in Ojibwa than she, who was taking a course in Ojibwa for the first time. How could she teach these children when she could not even speak the language? And if she could speak, whose voice would she use? Where was her sense of herself as an Ojibwa woman? Everything she had learned to value in society (and in herself) was brought into question as she realized she had lost the essential connections she needed with her Native culture if she were going to help educate these children. Who was she anyway?*

As Carla's story perhaps reveals, lost voice represents lost identity. Loss of voice has also had similar consequences for women as teachers. When public schools were opened in the late nineteenth century, the increased need for teachers led to the employment of women. As more women moved into teaching positions, men moved up the educational hierarchy (Patterson, 1986; Urban, 1990) to become administrators or teacher educators. Patterson (1986) points out that "growth of professional commitment and responsibility among teachers was retarded by the obvious depreciation of the role of teacher and by the society's failure to give women teachers equal place with their male counterparts" (p. 58).

Grumet (1988) describes structures in classrooms and demands on teachers that perpetuate the established paternal authority where prediction and control silences personal voices. In these classrooms, the dominant discourse is rationalist and objectivist, detached and emotion- free. Le Guin (1989) refers to this dominant discourse as the "father tongue." She calls for a new discourse that involves also listening to the "mother tongue," the language of poor men, women, and our children. Teachers who entered the profession found it nearly impossible to build and sustain the kinds of human relationships which would support the risk and trust necessary for learning to occur as classrooms became increasingly objective and impersonal. Instead, teachers were delivering their students to a patriarchy that disdained the private and the familiar. Grumet states: "The ideal teacher was one who could control the children and be controlled by her superiors" (p. 43). It is little wonder then, that in taking on the prescribed role of "teacher," many feel like impostors. The prescribed role seems to imply abandoning the child by perpetuating the notion that the child is a lesser being with no voice apart from the one we give him/her. In a setting where the private and the familiar are denied, or where the private and familiar feel out-of-place and awkward, neither teachers nor students will risk personal expression. Difficulties occur when multiplicity of meaning is suppressed in order to take on a single meaning prescribed by those in authority. For these reasons I believe it is essential to look a little closer at how and why teachers, particularly women, have been silenced over time.

Emerging From Patriarchy: A Silent Identity

Fine (1987) documents the insidious push towards silence in low-income schools. In essence, she shows us that children learn to emulate passivity and silence through the teachers (in most cases women) who have often been silenced themselves. In particular, her essay looks at how conversations in schools are often closed. Fine states that "a self-critical analysis of the fundamental ways in which we teach children to betray their own voices is crucial" (p. 172). Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), in linking self, voice, and mind, show us how integral voice is to the development of self-identity. It seems somewhat inevitable that voiceless children later go on to be voiceless adults (and teachers). Our system of education with its emphasis on control, and the inevitable silencing that results, is reproduced through our children who may themselves go on to be teachers. While it seems likely that we will always expect our young to subscribe to certain values and beliefs that affect their sense of identity, I feel it is important to be both aware and critical of what it is that we are asking our children and teachers to become. Failure to be aware and critical may result in the continuous perpetuation of a "prescribed" and passive role, one that ultimately affects us all.

Signposts to the Text

In this chapter I touched upon various aspects that influence our sense of self as teachers. In particular, I have shown how such influences create tensions between systems and individuals. For an individual the problem arises when the multiplicity of meaning is suppressed in order to take on a "prescribed" role. This prescribed role often entails suppressing the personal voice in favour of an objective and distanced voice. In such cases, individuals lacking power to define the situation are left with little alternative but to assume the prescribed role. In other words, the dominant person or group does not need to take on the role of the other, while the subordinate must do so or drop out of the system. If we ignore this situation, and the extent to which traditional models of education, educational theories, social codes, and traditions delimit or limit who we are, we do little other than perpetuate non-current views that cause a fundamental lack of connection and greater responsibility towards children.

I believe we need to become more aware of what happens when the multiplicity of selves, our many voices, are suppressed under a dominant discourse which has spanned centuries. As we become aware, I feel the need to take action within our institutions. I believe that by understanding selfhood as a process of social interaction we can explore the extent to which social norms both embrace who we are and what we may become through our action.

CHAPTER 5

Research and the Convergence of Personal and Cultural Scripts

Early in my doctoral program, I remember reading that the method chosen by the researcher should be compatible with the problem and goals of the inquiry (Watson, 1985). At that time, I completely agreed with this notion. I still agree, but with a caveat: I believe that strict adherence to a single method does not allow the researcher to consider the taken-for-granted assumptions that underline her project, the scrutiny of which may lead to the development of a deeper and more meaningful research account. Although I now realize this on a more conscious level, I know that self-scrutiny is not an easy task.

I began to see some of the problems with method in the initial stages of doing this inquiry. This was partly due to the conversations I had with my supervisor, Dr. Jean Clandinin (Dr. Clandinin understands the importance of relational living more than most people I know), and partly due to the reading of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960/1991) which is a critique of method itself. I would like to share, very briefly, some of the research experiences that have taken me from my original idea of research method as a task to be applied in a fixed manner, toward an appreciation of research as approach that seeks to come to an understanding of relationality.

In the initial stages of this inquiry, when I began speaking with graduate students, I remembered being very concerned with trying to get the interviews "right". I was not so aware of the opportunities for exploration and the importance of relationships within the research process. I quickly began to gain this awareness, however, when occasional differences of opinion with my participants began to shake my "safe" stance as researcher.

I realized that I needed to reassess my stance as researcher. In the process of doing so, I began to understand conflict and difference as a welcome aspect of researching. These companion challenges unraveled the cocoon of security constructed with threads of certainty. In my own situation, I began to see that I had slipped into using a more linear research method, one that avoided digression and uncertainty, one that did not always call for reflection on how the researcher's understanding or personal narrative may be shaping the research account. I began to realize that there may be as many versions of reality as there are experiences of it.

This shift in understanding led me to want to approach my research more openly, to embrace uncertainty and conflict when necessary, to present a narrative account that is not only more thoughtful but that begs the reader to question both the mundane and sacred stories we live by (Crites, 1971), and to be ever careful of an interpretation that presents a monolithic view point or a 'master narrative' (Lyotard, 1984). Unraveling the challenges of dealing not only with multiple views but with competing and conflicting narratives may be the litmus test of good interpretive research.

Problems with Interpretation

In this inquiry, as mentioned earlier, I was presented with competing narratives and points of view. Not only did these narratives point to inconsistencies and complexities inherent in any lived experience, but they made me question the similarities, differences, and connections between child and adult learners, and to theorize regarding the symbiotic relationship between the child and adult within each learner, that is, the cyclical nature of identity in education. Ultimately, this allowed me to see the necessity for reflection and understanding if educators are to go beyond reductionist methods to capture the constant flux of life through continual re-interpretations of its meaning. Perhaps one of the most difficult things in social life may be to overcome the narrow views by which educators are bound.

This new insight into reflection and re-interpretation marked the beginning of a shift in my research from simply reporting the experiences of the participants to struggling with interpretations of the research text. To be aware of how my early, rudimentary umderstandings and the suppositions of culture affected the interpretation of a narrative account became more important than a simple retelling of a text. I became more aware of the cultural tools provided to me to interpret a text (a research text not being separate from life but rather embedded in it). I began to appreciate that certain discourses are so dominant that they operate as blinders, making it difficult for any researcher to understand the ways in which they have been internalized, and to comprehend the privileges afforded to particular interpretations of a text. The problem of interpretation often becomes one of discovering personal blind spots as well as acknowledging that these blind spots are inevitable. Blind spots are inevitable by virtue of the individual's situation within a culture, with all of its attendant norms and assumptions. These norms and assumptions are so entrenched that they often go unnoticed and unexplored.

A reflexive and interpretive research process is consistent with the methodology practiced most often by children as they interact with the world. Children play with their experience but many also reflect on the meaning, the architecture and the organization of the world that they encounter. By consciously aspiring toward such an approach in my own research, I hoped to recapture and to find a place for some of my own childhood understandings within an adult framework: that of academic inquiry. I hoped to rediscover an understanding of what it means to re-collect life and to be a human being. Such a stance requires an openness to ambiguity, a respect for the unknown. It has been my experience that, in the public forums, educators rarely hear researchers express doubts about their findings. However, in private, wonderments and questions frequently surface.

Meg, a graduate student, shared the following concerning her own feelings about this preoccupation with certainty:

> *It was so hard in one of my classes. I wanted to be true to myself but I was aware that I was living a cover story. We read a number of research articles and I had so many questions but I was afraid to reveal my ignorance. All sorts of comments came to my mind, 'They may think I don't understand; that I'm not really graduate material; that my argument is not strong enough.' In talking with other students I was aware that we all had doubts but we were reluctant to share them. I wonder what was lost?*

It is in what we both know (what has been represented as "fact") and do not know (mysterious play of life) that, I believe, we must struggle, yet there seem to be very few places for thoughts to linger on the mystery of life itself. This involves situating ourselves in the research so as to ask ourselves continuously what it means to be human and what it means to live as a human being with others in the seamless web of life. This, I have come to discover, means a turn away from those methods that can only render the kind of truth already inherent in consequence of the method. In essence, a return to the things themselves before they are explained or re-presented as absolute truth. I believe we become awakened to the possibilities in one another through dialogue.

Two Kinds of Dialogue

For the purposes of this inquiry, it is important to distinguish between two types of dialogues — school talk and meaningful dialogue. Perhaps more than anything else, this research has given me a new way of thinking about dialogue as a research possibility. Through my research conversations with many of the graduate students who participated in this inquiry, I began to see that opportunities for meaningful dialogue are serendipitous. They could happen anywhere at any time but they may not ever occur either. It depends on what we intend by "dialogue".

I was initially nervous about having research conversations. In hindsight I believe this is partly because I did not have many opportunities to engage in meaningful listening situations, especially in school settings, from elementary school through to university. That this was so is, perhaps, due to the particular kind of listening most often valued in school. In schools, I believe students are often expected to listen in such a way that it trains them to be exclusionary, precise, to attend only to words and not to explore the silences between the words. In this kind of prescribed/ authorized attending, we miss the opportunity to hear not only what the other person says but to hear unsaid things about ourselves. Moreover, school listening and school talk often have the purpose of confirming what one already thinks rather than opening the listener up to the possibilities of discovery.

In my experience, meaningful dialogue between a researcher and her participants must be founded upon common interest and shared commitment to curiosity and openness. Listening may occur when two people are open to one another with a common goal of understanding. Following is my journal response to a meaningful dialogue with one of the inquiry's participants:

> *Gail spoke about her initial fear about being back at graduate school. I was initially surprised by her candour. In truth, I was quite touched by it. Gail's vulnerability made me recognize my own fears. The dialogue between Gail and me created a kind of transparency between two people. Through speaking further with Gail, I realized just how much I had been conditioned to hide my fear. My realization made me consider how fear often becomes manifested.*

The best research conversations, meaningful dialogues, do not seem to take place in a scheduled manner. Rather they seem to take place when there is a mutual desire of the partners in dialogue to stay together in conversation about a common interest, in this case, the experience of being at school as a graduate student. These conversations do not always end in agreement;

rather, they quite often lead to questioning the role of meaningful dialogue in terms of the experience being explored. Dialogue was especially useful in helping to illuminate problems that a particular belief within education may have created. The dialogue also pointed out that, by virtue of my not being able to stand outside of educational problems I identify, I am complicit in them. As a teacher, I live within the educational system. It is sometimes difficult to see, or perhaps to acknowledge, my own blind spots.

I was most fortunate to have much candid dialogue. These dialogues often began with the feelings of vulnerability at being a graduate student. A new graduate student has to grapple with a change in roles: she who once was an undergraduate student became a teacher, a respected member of the educational establishment. To return to student status forces an abrupt role redefinition, one that is not always comfortable. One becomes rather child-like, dependent on others for support, for recognition, for good advice. In my inquiry, the depth from which many of my participants spoke made me question my own experience as a new graduate student more deeply. The best moments seemed to entail going beyond hearing each other's public voice to hearing each other's private voice and, more often than not, gaining some understanding of the sources of these voices. Again, this did not mean that there was concurrence about the nature of the graduate experience. There was, however, a commitment to stay together in conversation and to explore the shadows that came as we brought our experiences to light. This made me aware that understanding often comes when one may have least expected it, and yet, ironically, "there is no method for stumbling" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 7) Can we be predisposed to stumbling if we are bound to method?

My initial supposition on research as method to be carried out had a tighter hold on me than I could ever imagine, and, yet, in the process of this research, I have come to understand that this supposition is not peculiar to me alone. I began to question more deeply why method seemed to have such a strongly adhesive grip on my life and the lives of many of the participants in my research inquiry. Adding Usher and Edwards (1994) to the conversation lets in a gleam of light:

> Education is very much the dutiful child of the Enlightenment and, as such, tends to uncritically accept a set of assumptions deriving from Enlightenment thought. Indeed, it is possible to see education as the vehicle by which Enlightenment ideals of critical reason, humanistic individual freedom, and benevolent progress are substantiated and realised. (p. 24)

What Usher and Edwards say seems particularly relevant, given that many of the participants like me in this inquiry are professional educators. And, like me, many of them are now re-assessing what it means to be an educated adult. It seems that for many of us, our education has been so complete that we are indeed well-educated children of the Enlightenment. Through reflecting on the project of doing an interpretive inquiry, I have come to believe that teachers need to have more time to reflect on their own experience and how it relates to the experience of others. In this way, more people may begin to appreciate how their experience diverges from their culture's sacred story, how life should unfold. More need the opportunity to understand that they can make a difference, that they do have the resources to effect education with their practice.

Personal Scripts

Silences resurface and possibilities for questioning open, calling for a return to action that will prompt both young and old to search for truths left out of school curricula. This call to search is ancient. It is a call that seeks answers to timeless questions, such as: Who am I ? What am I? More than ever, I believe the time has come when educators must seek to understand themselves so that each may, in turn, understand others. To understand oneself is only possible through understanding of the other. This view of self identity for purposes of my inquiry is best understood through its recursive nature, specifically the living cohesion between child, adult, and teacher. As I began to wrestle with new and old understandings, I became more critically aware, pressed to the point of discomfort so that I could no longer persist in my accustomed opinion. The research continued with a rereading of my old understandings. For the purposes of discussion and organization (I am reminded again of the linear temporality of writing), the structure of the text became an intertwining of personal experiences and others' experiences.

It was in a graduate class that I realized I was responding to a learning situation in a way that echoed the way I responded as a child. I wondered how other adult learners found the experience of returning to school. This experience, and my reflections on it, led me to inquire into the similarities, differences, and connections between child and adult learners. As a consequence, I conducted research conversations with thirty other adult learners returning to graduate school. The twists, turns, and problems that I encountered during this rereading of my old understandings, in combination with the analysis of the graduate students' experiences, made me pay closer attention to the cultural assumptions that are concealed beneath notions regarding identity formation.

Returning to the Inquiry

As I turned to the task of writing this dissertation I reckoned that, for both novice and experienced writer alike, the difficulty of writing may be one of deciding what to include and what to leave out of a text as well as where to place each part. Part of this arduous task becomes one of ordering events in such a way that the text may be understood. In so many ways this is an artificial task. In research, as in life, many things happen simultaneously and on so many different levels. It is particularly difficult to put thoughts in a logical sequence because of the nature of time. I return to the earlier musings of Atwood (1988): "Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space . . . . You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away" (p. 3). Through Atwood's words, I am reminded that our lives do not progress in a chronological order with an obvious beginning, middle and end; rather events and circumstances just happen, often unexpectedly, with many different twists and turns. The writing of this text has not been different.

More often than not, it is in those events that happen to us unexpectedly that we may find places to begin. Our task may become one of watching for what surfaces in our daily lives before it disappears.

Indeed as child, or adult, or teacher, there have been many unexpected moments that have surfaced over and over again, catching me off guard and making me question how society treats children, as well as making me want to redefine my place within the system of education in general. Such moments of insight, however, keep resurfacing in different ways and in different forms, demanding a response.

Returning to school as a doctoral student in teacher education and curriculum studies, there was one moment in particular that led me to probe more deeply, to return to those life long moments largely left unexplored. What I eventually realized was that I seemed to be returning to questions regarding self identity and adult/ child relations.

It was the return to school as an adult student and not by direct interactions with children, oddly enough, that led to this inquiry. Perhaps this is because my return to school gave me the chance to diverge from my usual role as teacher, allowing for glimpses and traces of how children's lives are storied. This best illustrates Atwood's point, that in life we do not happen upon things in a predetermined order, rather things just happen, often unexpectedly out of the middle of our lives. And, unexpectedly, out of the middle of our lives "a question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion" (Gadamer, 1960, p. 330). Rather than consciously selecting a research topic, the question of the cyclical nature of adult/child relationships presented itself to me through my own childhood and my experience as a teacher, and was crystallized in my return to school as a graduate student.

I found that by inquiring into the commonalities and differences in the experiences of child and adult learners, I was also inquiring into the problems of ideologically-fixed boundaries between the identity of child/adult and the kind of knowledge that our education system validates for both child and adult learners. In keeping with Gadamer's remark, this struggle to become more critically aware often resulted in great personal discomfort, a realization that I could no longer avoid new understanding nor tolerate the persistance of my accustomed opinion.

In the next chapter, I recount the the events which constituted the unfolding of my research inquiry with graduate students. I begin with the narrative moment in which the subject of this inquiry crystallized. Following from this moment, I relate anecdotes drawn from thirty research conversations I conducted with graduate students in Education. In the research conversations, I explore, with participants, their perspectives on returning to school and analyze those perspectives in order to develop understanding of the various meanings the return to school holds for graduate students.

CHAPTER 6

Where Child and Adult Converge

In a graduate class I attended several years back, the professor had us pass a sheet of paper around the room. He expected us to fill in a space indicating subjects in which we thought we were knowledgeable. Glancing at this piece of paper, I experienced an odd feeling. It seemed to have origins deep within my being. This feeling became stronger and stronger as the dimensions of the paper seemed to squeeze me with its straight lines, tight spaces, and predictable sequences. Suddenly I was reliving the feel of my grade-three desk. It was huge; I felt awkward in it; it seemed like so much desk for such a little person. My little arm had to reach almost out of my body in an attempt to connect with the inside of this voluminous desk. My fingers probed the dark, cavernous mouth, nimbly and deftly avoiding some one else's abandoned chewing gum. I grabbed my pencil crayons, with their slippery, familiar feel, welcoming them to this new task that Mr. V had just rattled off. We were to draw "a number line".

I turned to a fresh new page in my math scribbler — a page full of so many possibilities. Perhaps I knew a number line probably meant linear construction, perhaps not. Nonetheless I saw other possibilities as the numbers started to become visible, my imagination gathering them in from all around. The numbers seemed to flow out of my pencil crayon and onto the paper, making their way in the shape of a funnel, spiralling bigger and bigger and bigger at the mouth, until finally they moved off the page, all *around the room, out the door, and into infinity. That was my number line. Slam went Mr. V's ruler across my small grade-three hand. That slam left marks that were straight and unyielding. Suddenly, as an adult, I saw no difference between those marks on my wrist that day many years ago and the lines on the piece of paper in that university class.*

I found myself objecting to this task, this framework imposed by another. Yet, over what was the objection? To suggest that I was objecting to authority or the memory of subtle forms of punishment would be partially correct, but perhaps too simplistic. Both the experiences in my former grade three class and my university class had similar, predictable ways of dealing with knowledge. In the third-grade class, my life experience dictated that I saw more than one way to draw a number line. But the teacher did not acknowledge the ways or speak the possibilities. In the university class, I saw knowledge presented as consistent, uniform and with one right answer. Yet I believe that there are many important subjects that defy being treated or defined as we treat or define lines on a page. In the graduate class, why didn't I ask: "What kind of knowledge are we speaking of here?" Perhaps I did not realize at the time that this was an important question to me. It may have been that, based on my own education, I expected to objectify knowledge and to think in ways that separated me from understanding myself and others. Connelly and Clandinin (1985) state that "teaching and learning need to be self-consciously open to alternative constructions of scientific knowing, of aesthetic knowing" (p. 180). After all these years, I am only now beginning to appreciate this aesthetic sense of knowing. But why is this so?

My memory, my recollection from grade three, was powerful enough to make me stop to think and to question. I found myself wondering: "Does my childhood experience as a student give birth to the second adult experience as a student?" Perhaps in returning to school the adult returns not only in the physical sense but in the psychological sense as well. Primarily because the past intermingles with the present it may be nearly impossible to understand or ascertain the starting point of an adult student's experience. I found myself wondering about boundaries: where does adulthood start and childhood end? Any experience I have as an adult student will quite naturally flow out of the past. Since school may be the most extensive institutional experiencing that a child may have, this sense of continuity is not surprising. I do not experience that this present time as an adult student is altogether separate from past time spent as a child student. I begin to wonder about this sense of continuity. Is it so strange, so compelling, only because a sense of discontinuity seems "normal?"

These questions regarding my experiences in graduate school have led me to wonder how other adult students experience being back in school. I wondered about what the experience of returning to school was like for them. Were they returning in the same way as I? What factors characterized the the complex of experiences around the interface between their return to school as adults and their childhood experiences of school? I began to wonder and, in doing so, I was surprised to find others who were willing to share how they came to grips with experiences in graduate school.

Hearing Through Silences: Perspectives on Returning to School

> DAN SPEAKS: Ultimately, Karyn, I would have to say that being at school as a graduate student has become an experience of learning to trust myself. I have been through an intense process of rediscovery

> regarding my education and the best part is that I have learned to trust what I think.

Like Dan, I find the experience of graduate school a chance to discover what I believe to be true and worthwhile, without some greater authority telling me what that is. Yet Dan's comments beg the question: if returning to school as adults placed us back on a path to trusting ourselves then what had we trusted in before, if not ourselves?

I find myself reflecting on the experience of my own education. Indeed, if Dan were anything like me, he would have spent the better part of his schooling learning to think that what is most valued and true is in proportion to how little we had to do with it. Many of the educational experiences that Dan and I experienced seemed to entail learning based on imitation, where focus on skills took precedence over meaning or self-understanding. The danger is, perhaps, not so much in learning skills or method — knowledge of such kind may indeed be useful — but rather the danger becomes in one's denying one's own truths in favour of what has been storied as sacred, the supremacy of reason.

> JILL SPEAKS: I felt like a caged animal. I felt like I needed to break out. I felt very, very, very, frustrated. This person [instructor] would actually change my commas around. Sometimes, she would change — put a sentence in, that would take the whole essence of my paper away. It seems like I have done nothing but learn the answers to a certain professor's questions.

It would seem that Jill did not enter into a positive pedagogical relationship with her teacher. I think it would be simplistic to infer from Jill's experience that being back at school either introduces one into a pedagogical relationship, or it does not. In order for there to be a pedagogical relationship there must be reciprocity. There must be trust on the part of both participants in the relationship. As Bollnow (1989) has said: "trust demands a response. There is no trust without faith which we have toward a person who has trust in us" (p. 38). Moreover, some students may not appreciate professors who believe that the honing of skills is a necessary step in the direction of understanding.

Despite the political, cultural, intellectual shifts in boundaries ushered in by recent political and social changes, I doubt that the range of classroom experiences has changed significantly from the time that Dan and I were in school. I think there always have been and always will be individual teachers who believe that the action and work of a "great" teacher involves moral and ethical dimensions. Unfortunately, many of these teachers burn out because they care too much (Jevne & Zingle, 1991, p. i). My experience with colleagues who are currently teaching supports these findings. For example, I think of a colleague who was recently required to give a standardized reading test to her grade one students. Halfway through the test, she noticed that many of the children were frustrated, and that some of the children had begun to cry because they could not understand what to do. The test made invalid assumptions about the children's understandings and did little other than make my colleague feel like a stranger. My colleague made what she termed a moral and ethical response: she refused to give the test to her grade one students. She challenged the purpose of the test. She said it did not seem to be so much about whether the children could read or think, rather it seemed intended to separate the wheat from the chaff. The price of her refusal to give the test may be her job.

Perhaps Jill's concern, like my colleague's concern, that her views are being silenced, may also speak to the notion that there is not adequate place for the voice of the individual in education. This may be particularly worrisome if education is to be considered one of the main vehicles for the socialization of citizens and, if you believe, as Greene (1988) asserts that "Rather than being challenged to attend to the actualities of their lived lives, students are urged to attend to what is "given in the outside world" (p. 7). Jill reminds us that graduate school may not be so different from the rest of the world. It may also, at times, be a place where students learn to make compromises between their own ideals and practical considerations of the lived world. Ralston Saul (1995) suggests that the future of public education will be to focus primarily on aligning basic education with the needs of the job market. Ralston Saul (1995), however, cautions us as to the outcomes of such a trend:

> What the corporatist approach seems to miss is the simple role of higher education — to teach thought. A student who graduates with mechanistic skills and none of the habits of thought has not been educated. Such people will have difficulty playing their role as citizens. The weakening of the humanities in favour of profitable specialization undermines the universities' ability to teach thought. (p. 71)

But Ben, another graduate student, reminds us that some scholars actively welcome a corporatist view of education:

> BEN SPEAKS: I expected graduate school to be enlightening . . . I know it is a common notion that graduate students should do their own work but you pay all this money . . . I don't want to come to classes and then teach the classes myself . . . I came to get information.

What appeared somewhat problematic for me, with Ben's observations, is his general lack of appreciation of the connections between humans, or of a view of education as a vehicle to enable the development of greater empathy between human beings. With a view of education such as Ben's, it is difficult for me to imagine that education would encourage much more than narrow self interest. I suppose that is why speaking with Ben was difficult for me. My understanding of the purpose of education is the exact opposite of Ben's. Or so I thought. In struggling with Ben's point of view I began to see that, in some respects, I also use information to prop up who I am. I often guard my ideas as though these ideas are me. Even so, I am now beginning to understand what is to be lost in such activity.

In speaking further with Ben, I suddenly remembered other moments like the number line story with which I began this chapter. Through the continuous process of learning to assimilate facts and information I have become a lot like the adults of which de Saint-Exupery (1943) speaks:

> If I have told you these details about the asteroid, and made a note of its number for you, it is on account of the grown-ups and their ways. Grown-ups love figures. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, "What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?" Instead, they demand: "How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?" Only from the figures do they think they have learned anything about him . . . . They are like that. One must not hold it against them. Children should always show great forbearance toward grown-up people. (pp. 17-18)

Perhaps, like de Saint-Exupery, I mourn something lost to many of us in adulthood, and I turn towards children in the hope of discovering traces of what that something may be. What is the importance of childhood identity to an adult sense of identity? To try and discover the answers requires more in-depth understanding of adult experiences with being back at school. The study of adult experiences with being back at school may provide a particular perspective on the subject of what childhood identity may mean to an adult's sense of self.

Shaping Childhood Identity

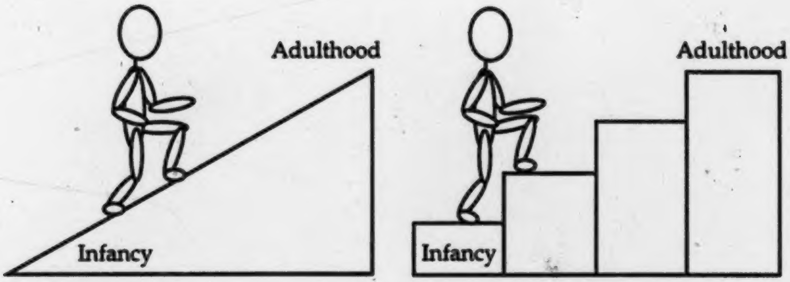
It is difficult to speak about the identity of children without also discussing the role that adults have in shaping childhood identity. I believe that my inquiry points to the likelihood that **child and adult are co-constitutional**. In fact, the relationship between adult and child could be viewed as cyclical: the child is within the adult and the adult is within the child. Jung (1959, p. 178) observed that:

> The child is therefore . . . both beginning and end, an initial and a terminal creature. The initial creature existed before man [sic] was, and the terminal creature will be when man is not.

In this view, human development is portrayed as cyclical, engaging each of us in a process of simultaneously looking back and looking forward, informing our actions as well as those of the generations we inhabit. In the experience of death, for example, whether the individual is a child or an adult, the experience serves to educate those around the individual about death and about their expectations of death. Whether the mourners are children or older adults, each person must reckon with their own experience, from their own perspective.

Yet, in our culture, childhood has been storied as a separate state of development from adulthood or, alternatively, as a stage to out-grow on the way to adulthood. Such representation is linear rather than cyclical: the goal of development is the educated adult. While indicators of development are useful for recognizing common stages of growth, they respond largely to physical and mental changes and not to the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human development.

Figure 1 illustrates this point. The child depicted in the pictures is stepping or climbing up towards adulthood. The child is alone: there are no adults or other children to learn from or interact with. The notion that separate states exist for children and adults is so basic to much of curriculum theory and practice that, until recently, rarely have such beliefs been questioned. Suransky (1982, p. 8), among others, is seeking to challenge established views of children. She suggests that "the modern science of childhood tends to represent the view from above", that is, to represent an adult view of the child, which in turn leads to attitudes, policies and practices that "alienate the life project of the child from the child's own existential reality." Sampson (1989), Polkinghorne (1988), Shotter (1993) argue for a review of mechanical representations of human development and argue for a more dynamic view of the person within psychology, a reconstruction of theories of the person to more closely reflect the wide variety of social experience. The cyclical relationship between adult and child, as described by Jung (1959) above, suggests a rethinking of understandings of the meaning of childhood among educators.



(a) Continuous Development (b) Discontinuous Development

Figure 1 Is development continuous or discontinuous? (after Berk, 1996)

Representations of childhood such as the one used by Berk (1996) in Figure 1, need to be examined. Educators need to know how they respond to the range of developmental experience associated with different social, cultural, class and historical positions. For this reason I think it is important to expose and challenge hierarchical notions of human development, and to explore the significance such representations have on the individual's sense of self. With such consideration, teacher educators will be more capable of recognizing and understanding the effects created by such messages, as well as engaging with the potential of alternative views.

Perhaps listening to how adults recall their experiences of childhood can be instructive in this project.

> DAWN SPEAKS: It wasn't until I took this course from this professor that I realized that I had been a nice little girl all those years in school. I simply did the assignments to please. When this professor started asking me hard questions dealing with my experiences, my emotions, I realized how little thinking I was doing on my own. It really struck me how separated I had become from myself. I now understand why so many people talk about finding themselves.

Dawn points to her own education as largely one of memorizing information that rarely had any relation to what she and her classmates had to do with it. In fact, Dawn may have been so conditioned to please, "to [not] attend to the actualities of her lived [life] as a child" (Greene 1989, p. 7) that freedom of thought became merely a grand illusion.

One may further wonder how widespread Dawn's experience of being conditioned to please and conform actually is. Fine (1987) in discussing the "good" urban student at one high school states, "They learned not to raise, and indeed to help shut down, 'dangerous' conversation. The price of 'success' may be the muting of one's own voice" (p. 164). To varying degrees, all of the graduate students I spoke with were successful students. I use the qualifier (varying) not to weaken the notion that children and adults are conditioned to please but to suggest it does and can change and vary depending on the individual and the context. But what then is the price of this early successful muting (since this may be reality for many school children), and how is it being constituted?

The Residue of Fragmentation

Dawn's next words still ring in my ears, "Where was I all those years, Karyn?" My reply was with a barrage of questions: "Where was Dan?" "Where was I?" Where are we now? What is this educational system (of which I am a part) really asking us and our children to become? Some of the answers to this latter question come from the experiences of people like Dawn, Dan, Jill, and me, people who are struggling to hear the murmurs from the suppressed child within, the child who is trying to resurface in their lives. Is it difficult for many people now to hear the murmurs because, as children, they became so used to being spoken for or about that their authentic voices were silenced? Is our Western system of education one that inevitably renders children passive and silent?

Some answers may also be found in classrooms at all levels of education in which students are not so much viewed as creators and co-creators of their world but as recipients of the cultural status quo. Some answers may also be found with the children and adults who are assigned labels as "difficult" or "crazy" because they dare to challenge widely-held beliefs.

Let me return to the experience in the graduate class that delivered me to this moment. I now realize what I had objected to in this class. It was not so much the task of writing about that which I felt knowledgeable. Indeed, to be fair, I knew that sheet of paper was sent around to ascertain common interests for focus groups. I believe I was objecting to the lack of discussion about what could be talked about, the resistance to negotiating the meaning of experience and the separation of the experience from its context.

I believe the cost of being successfully educated according to dominant Western theories of education may be that students become strangers to themselves and others. Perhaps this is why, as it is the case with Dawn, many are on a quest to find what they have become separated from — which is themselves. I believe that the search for oneself is not a search for an autonomous core-self, but rather a quest for the open, curious and creative child apprehended in the process of becoming educated adults. Some current educational practices so successfully direct children toward representational thought that, as teachers and products of such an education, rarely can we recognize the child in ourselves nor our hand in the oppression of other people's children. Yet I believe the celebration of a representational view of the world is at the heart of much of the curriculum of schools.

For this reason, and in this next section, I begin to examine how schools in general shape children to conform to an idealized adult goal of development. I specifically look at how these school practices are created, constituted and re-constituted. Although I believe that boys and girls are often expected (forced) to conform to different adult developmental ideals based on gender, it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to go into gender differences. Rather, in this inquiry, I am primarily concerned with examining and bringing to light current educational policies and practices that perpetuate the notion that children (boys and girls) are distinct from, and inferior to, the adult. Because I do not believe there is such a thing as a generic child, what may be interpreted as experiences of oppression vary from child to child. Furthermore, although I believe the oppression of children as a group in our Western culture goes largely unchallenged, individual children react in different ways depending on their situation and their individual differences. This whole notion will be touched upon in Chapter Eight of the dissertation through a story of a seven-year-old former student who taught me that "resistance" is not necessarily futile.

Thinking Badly

Holt's (1983) book, *How Children Learn* , suggests that in schools we often *train* [emphasis mine] young children's natural ways of learning out of them. He states that we "teach children to think badly . . . We give them strategies that are self-limiting and self-defeating"(p.viii). 'Thinking badly' may actually entail, to varying degrees, asking children to deny or betray their emotional and experiential connection to the world in favour of unreflectively adopting representational knowledge, the knowledge validated by the adult. But what is this representational knowledge? (I think of de Saint-Exupery's image of adults and their thought process). How is representational knowledge created and validated?

An excerpt from a required textbook (Yellin & Blake, 1994, p. 109) for use in a Language Arts course in a teacher education program most explicitly illustrates how this may be done.

> The representational *function* is the function of language in which information is conveyed to others. In one sense it completes the communication cycle that begins with the child using language to satisfy basic needs. Sending messages, giving reports, describing objects, and helping others are all part of the informative or representational function of language. This more complex and sophisticated use of language characterizes adult language . . . No longer is language used just to satisfy basic needs, ask questions of others, or socialize. These are all very important functions in themselves, but now language takes on the role of conveying important information to others who require it. The child is becoming an adult.

What is lost when educators insist that the primary function of language is to convey important information, and when they insist that children use language to name and classify, and not to communicate their needs or their curiosity about the world or their sense of connection with others? One may infer from this statement that, in Western culture, to be a successful adult means relinquishing one's past as a child. Is this why Dan stated that being back at school has entailed the process of learning to trust himself? Had he been socialized into trusting representational thought or valuing information? Is this why Ben, and other graduate students to whom I spoke, believe collecting information is important because it is the mark of success of a well-educated adult? Are children socialized into trusting representational thought or valuing information so that becoming an adult involves little more than adopting an ideology, the right ideology? Is this what it means to be a well-educated adult? In forcing children to turn towards representational thought as if it were the high point in human cognitive development are we teaching them to think badly? Does becoming an adult mean thinking in a prescribed manner and only in that manner? What is the price paid for denying the young child's predisposition towards the perceptual, imaginative domain?

Huxley (1971) said that we are all geniuses up to the age of ten. His statement rings true to me when I observe young children in play. Free of the clutter of facts and ideologies to be upheld and proven, young children are not tied to absolute reality; they are, instead, free to explore with passion ideas before they are re-presented as absolute fact: what "is." To be so sure of "what is" seems to call for the accumulation of facts that, over time, come to be re-presented as "truth", and yet is this not the domain of the adult thought? Is this not the kind of thinking that our education system tells us we must strive towards?

Pablo Picasso, when visiting a display of young children's artwork commented that "it took me a lifetime to learn to draw like them [children]" (Penrose, 1981, p. 307). Picasso has often been referred to as a "genius." However, from his comment, I get the feeling that Picasso equates genius with the young child and not with the representational form of thought equated with being an adult in the world. Like the young child, Picasso's work offers no conclusion; it often opens onto the mysterious in life, begging for different responses. Yet in the hierarchy of the Western knowledge system, at best imagination is marginalized in favour of the representational thought that is considered more important for the serious matter of scholarly work. I do not believe there is a "generic child" with "generic ways," yet, I am inclined to believe, as Picasso did, that young children are predisposed to the perceptual and imaginative domains. I suppose this is why as a teacher I am often disturbed by the many children I encounter who are unable just to "play" with ideas. In the same vein, I am also disturbed by the many undergraduate students I teach who not only passively accept information but who become anxious when they are expected to think for themselves.

The Substance of Representation in Education

Messages favouring a representational view of human development, such as the one cited above are still used in textbooks in teacher education programs today. This is even more remarkable given that there have been a number of books and papers that point to inherent problems in these theories (Kennedy, 1986; Kvale, 1992; Matthews, 1980). As Bruner (1986) has pointed out, theorists such as Piaget constituted rather than merely described the realities of growth in our culture (p. 136). For some, however, Piaget's theory has come to be seen as absolute truth. The understanding of his writing within its historical and social context is lost. Instead, his ideas have been appropriated and interpreted to suit the needs of a new generation of theorists.

Piaget believed that knowledge was hierarchical; I contend that identity is cyclical. There is no contradiction unless one applies Piaget's belief that "evolution is rational in nature" (Kitchener, 1986) to individuals, not just to knowledge. According to Kitchener, "Piaget ... sees himself as an epistemologist and not as a 'pure psychologist'. If this is true, however, then ... the standard picture of Piaget [is] seriously wrong" (p. 4). Kitchener goes on to describe the intellectual and scientific climate in which Piaget emerged:

> Several theoretical issues surrounded controversies about the nature of evolutionary biology. These included vitalism vs. materialism, holism vs. elementarism, teleology vs. mechanism, emergence vs. reduction, orthogenesis (progress) vs. nondirectedness, order vs. chance, nature vs. nurture, the creation of novelty in evolution vs. the unfolding of what was preexistent, and evolution as a cosmic principle vs. evolution as a local principle (operating only in a certain sector of life).

> These and related issues form the theoretical backdrop to much of Piaget's thinking.
> It takes only a moment's reflection to see that, if these issues arise on the phylogenetic scale of the species, they also arise on the ontogenetic scale of the individual. ... It is not surprising, therefore, to find Piaget developing a general theory or paradigm that *can* [emphasis mine] be applied to several ... areas at once—evolutionary biology, embryology, psychogenesis, and the history of science. ... The temptation for a global thinker like Piaget to take all of these areas as the province of a new field—genetic epistemology—appears almost overwhelming. (p. 6)

The theories of Freud, Erikson, Kohlberg, Bloom, and Piaget (at least as commonly interpreted) share a hierarchical view of development. Each theory outlines a view in which the child is seen as distinct from, and inferior to, the adult. For example, Erikson developed eight stages of the human life cycle which emphasized the psychosocial outcomes of development. "At each psychosocial stage, a major psychological conflict is resolved. If the outcome is positive, individuals acquire attitudes and skills that permit them to contribute constructively to society" (Berk, 1996, p. 17). A concern with such models is that they represent human development as linear and unidirectional and position the child as something to be abandoned if developing beings are to become knowledge seekers, makers, and possessors. As Kennedy (1986) remarks,

> Piaget's account places the child within a knowledge paradigm for which the cultural ideal of an objective science - -i.e. the transcendence of "perception" by "intelligence" - - becomes a genetic epistemological goal, and the young child, with his strong perceptual modalities comes to be seen as a radically incomplete and egocentric being. The child comes to know in any ultimately valid sense only through no longer being a child. (p. 63)

A problem with representational views of development is that they fail to appreciate that boundaries between child and adult shift and change, while remaining contained in the web of being.

Perpetuating a split between adult and child is not unique to the authors of textbooks in teacher education. The problem has more to do with the fact that textbooks are a major tool for transmitting major theories of psychology. Psychological theory is only one aspect of the many things that student teachers must learn. An unquestioning person may interpret such theories as factual, in a way that I believe can be detrimental to the teacher as much as to her students' developing sense of identity. Compounding the problem, teacher education provides far too few opportunities for students to do critiques of these developmental theories through such means as evaluating them against their own life experience, notwithstanding that researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly (1988, 1995), Coles (1989, 1990) and Paley (1986) advocate such an approach.

Are Children so Different from Us?

> JENNIFER SPEAKS: My son was starting grade one just about the time I was starting graduate school. I remember him being all upset and saying 'But mommy I don't know anything . . . I can't start grade one when I don't know anything.' "He was so upset. When I looked into his face I knew I was feeling the same way about going back to school.

Children's realities are often storied as being so different from adults' that adults may be surprised when they discover that the experiences faced by both children and adults are more similar than different. What is more, adult reaction to situations that involve children often show an insensitivity towards them. If, for example, an adult cries, other adults are perhaps not quite so inclined to ignore the situation. However, how often do adults ignore the suffering of children? "Just ignore him, he is just trying to get your attention" or " just let her cry or she will expect you to pick her up each time she cries". If children were not viewed as distinct and, in many cases, inferior to adults, I doubt that we would be so inclined to think of them with such little empathy. Rather we may be much more like Jennifer who recognizes that children and adult boundaries shift and change, but are nonetheless contained by the web of our being.

I doubt that Piaget could have predicted that his model for cognitive development would have such far-reaching effects or be embraced with such fervor by educators. Yet, over time, classical theories of development such as his have become so dominant that we seem no longer capable of seeing, let alone questioning or understanding the cyclical, swirling, spiralling nature of our being. I wonder how we can ever begin to recognize children's ways of being and knowing as worthwhile when we unreflectively embrace theories of development that valorize adulthood while holding childhood in disdain.

Perhaps by examining and questioning the messages that many classical theories of child development give us, we can begin to explore and challenge the socially constructed boundaries between child and adult that seem to go against us acquiring a richer and deeper sense of self. Many psychologists (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Kvale, 1992; Parker & Shotter, 1990) suggest that such change is necessary, pointing out that their discipline gets its power as a regulatory force from its basis as a science. Humans, and teachers in particular, want to know that what they are doing is the right thing. They want certainty, the ability to point to research which absolutely supports their practice. While there are indeed many within the discipline of psychology who are trying to open a dialogue about many of the classical stage development theories, their task is, no doubt, a difficult one. In

Deconstructing Social Psychology (1990) Stringer, for example, found that many students of psychology were not interested in thinking about the contradictions inherent in much of the literature in psychology textbooks. They were much more likely to be uncritical and to assimilate the information (p. 32). Perhaps this finding is not quite so startling, given that, from the time they are children, many people are taught to be gatherers of information, and much less likely to be encouraged to be critical about what this information may mean for ourselves and others.

So why critique psychology? Because in education, psychology is perhaps the most powerful knowledge-making instrument we have. Many of our policies and practices are founded within psychology. The "truths" created by this dominant belief system are harmful because they tend to separate the knower from what may be known. We can see this in the case of theories of identity formation in which adult knowers "story" the children who are to be known as deficient in the qualities that make up human identity. Classical theories of development, of which identity formation is a part, set up hierarchical dualities of child/adult and unformed/formed, in which the adult is always the superior of the child, unless, of course, we have romanticized childhood, in which case the hierarchy is reversed. We need to re-examine this oppositional relationship between child and adult if we are to entertain the notions that identity may be multi-dimensional and that adulthood is not necessarily the epitome of human development. The dominant mode of educational psychology in the late twentieth century has done little towards the end of admitting to the multi-dimentionality of identity. Through reconsidering the role of psychology in education we may be in a better position to expose the harmful effects of such a system of knowledge and re-imagine alternative images of human development.

It is not just the discipline of psychology that has created the myth that human beings do not live in reciprocal and communicative unity. Rather, Western culture promotes and therefore constitutes such a reality. It is also a rather humbling thought to realize that I am part of the "we" that is implicated in the complex processes by which children are socially constructed as separate. In other words, I am part of the monolithic structure that I critique. I would not have realized this in quite this way had it not been for one of my participants in the inquiry.

> LEANNE SPEAKS: It isn't that I'm brighter than anyone else; I'm an impostor really, but I figured out long ago when I was getting mediocre grades that no one is interested in what I think. What they want to hear is what they think; my job becomes one of figuring out what that is.

At first the only thing that Leanne and I agreed on was that we disagreed with each other on pretty much everything. For this reason there seemed to be no reason to have any further research conversations. I was not interested in trying to deal with conflict, let alone integrate it in the earlier phases of the research process. An earlier version of part of this chapter was in press before I returned to Leanne to ask her to expand on what she meant by the word "impostor". In speaking further to Leanne it became apparent that she was very adept at naming the shape of her reality within graduate school. I began to see that I was like her in more respects than I had been willing to admit. Leanne made me realize that I am a part of the enterprise that I critique.

Language: The Elusive Butterfly

Especially important for this discussion is the crucial role that language plays in our Western culture in perpetuating the messages we send about children. As I previously noted, textbooks carry strong written messages that encode/encapsulate our hidden assumptions about adult/child relations. Our everyday language also reveals our belief systems. In *Metaphors We Live By,* Lakoff and Johnson (1980) illustrate how metaphors are part of our everyday speech that affect not only the way we perceive but the way we think and act. They give this example using the conceptual metaphor "Argument is war" played out through the use of our everyday expressions such as "*Your claims are indefensible, I demolished his argument,* or *I've never won an argument with him*" [They explain that] "we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war . . . Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war" (p. 4).

Turning to everyday expressions that reflect how people think and act towards children reveals that adolescents may be reprimanded with words such as "Stop behaving like a child" or "You are acting like a baby." In the same vein, adults slur other adults with such admonitions as "Grow up" or "Stop that childish behavior." At first glance, it seems that the way our society denigrates individuals by ascribing to them child-like qualities is but a minimal reflection of the way we view children and has but minimal impact on them. But, stop to consider the energy that special interest groups spend on trying to raise public consciousness by changing the language that has often been used to describe various minorities. The word "alderman" has now been replaced by "councillor" and the term "First Nations" is now used in place of the misnomer "Indians". Perhaps the denigratory ascription of child-like behavior may not be quite so innocuous a custom after all.

If the language we often use to refer to children casts them as being in many respects inferior, then perhaps we do need to examine this more closely. The cover of the 1996 White Pages telephone directory in Edmonton, Alberta, commissioned in recognition of the Alberta Research Council's 75th anniversary, depicts babies handling objects that symbolize the Council's main areas of technology development. The former president of the Alberta Research Council praised the work as follows, "I congratulate Grant Leier, the artist, for his clever depiction of things scientific. What better way to take the mystery (and stuffiness) out of science than to put technology in the hands of *mere* [emphasis mine] infants" (Alberta Research Council, 1996, p.1). I draw your attention to the word 'mere' to describe children. I doubt that one often hears the word mere used to refer to an adult, especially a male adult. I have heard the term 'a *mere* woman'. Perhaps the language used to refer to women and children has in common certain oppressive qualities, as does any language used to describe a group of people who have not been typically given the opportunity to speak for themselves. Yet women are now speaking out in ways that can give them a part in determining the future and their part in it; redefining sexist speech is only a part of this redefinition. Children, on the other hand, seem to have little chance in defining who they are apart from what adults tell them they should be. In *Making Connections* (1990), Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer point out that Western culture does not value the knowledge of children, particularly girls, and the language, images, idioms, and texts we sometimes use to describe children make this painfully transparent.

Nonetheless we may speak of specific adult groups such as women, handicapped adults, and First Nations people often in the same way we speak of children. As Lakoff and Johnson(1980) state so clearly, the language we use affects the way we think and act. The demeaning way we refer to children affects both children directly and the nature of adults' personal relationships with them.

This argument is particularly relevant given that children learn the lessons of the predominant cultural story well. Is it little wonder that when a grade eight teacher commented that I, as a child of twelve, was refreshingly unsophisticated, I was deeply offended? It seems I had already learned that to be sophisticated and mature was highly valued. My march down the path towards the sophistication of adulthood began well before I applied lipstick to my face at the age of four. In looking up the noun "sophistication" in the dictionary I found the synonyms adulteration; falsification. Under the adjective "sophisticated", I found cultured; pretentiously wise; possessing superficial information. In presenting such images of the adult, what are we asking of children?

Western culture has a best-kept secret. Quite simply, children's ways of knowing and being are not always valued. Adults rarely question the origins of their attitudes to children, let alone what this attitude may mean to their sense of self. Yet this disregard for children's ways of being is insidious. The aspects of the self that our society most often mutes are curiosity and wonder; these are the aspects that come from the depths of being where the child lives in us all. Like many of the graduate students I have spoken with, I, too, am meeting the child in myself who has been subsumed within the adult image towards which I have been taught to strive. Ironically, I am doing so because my refusal to rely overly much on method has opened me up to see many possibilities for becoming a more integrated individual. In my research, had I not been surprised by some faint echo of a childhood self long past, I would have missed seeing something new. I think of the words of Carse (1986) who says:"To be prepared against surprise is to be trained. To be prepared for surprise is to be educated" (p. 23). It seemed that, at least for some, a formal education may have been nothing more than successful training. Learning to listen and trust in parts of myself long since hidden has only been possible through my return.

A Return

The word 'return' derives from the French nineteenth century form 'retourne' meaning circular movement; rotation and deviation from a course (OED). In looking at my return, and indeed at the return of many graduate students I interviewed during this time, I find that a re-turn often means a turn to those experiences that create the present. If learning is to occur in graduate school, does the adult student face the great challenge of being child-like again? Does there need to be a certain willingness to leave behind what we already know so we have the chance of seeing something new? I believe we can unlearn years of conditioned patterns that we may deem harmful to our own education. The poet, teacher, and writer, Natalie Goldberg (1986), advises "the trick is to keep your heart open" (p. 28). Ellen speaks about how she reopened the past with all of its preexisting conditions and returned to a younger, more open, self.

> ELLEN SPEAKS: It is wonderful to be in the classroom without being responsible for anyone's learning but my own. Yesterday I sat and read for hours. I did not even realize that so much time had passed. It seemed like only ten minutes . . . my mind seemed to be suspended by my own questions. At one point I started to cry because I felt so open and fresh, like a newborn baby. I feel so vulnerable, so young . . . it is as if I'm renewing my own heart, seeing with new eyes and crying real tears. In a very real sense, I feel as if I'm rediscovering the world.

Kerry echoes Ellen's sentiments. In returning to school, he left behind an old — and aging self and discovered a new, younger, and more vital self.

> KERRY SPEAKS: When I came to this university as a graduate student, I left everything about me behind. It is hard because I don't have family here and most people here seem to have their own lives. They put their day in and leave. Yet, in an odd way, it is good to be away from home because I am discovering new things about myself. In some ways I look back to my old life and I think it was quite stale; suddenly, I feel younger and more vital.

The actual physical move offered Kerry a chance to move away from the mundane, and from all of the circumscribed expectations within the mundane. Although his move may not have been easy, it seems to have offered Kerry a chance to discover new things about himself. This, of course, is not to suggest that a move will open everyone up to new possibilities and potentialities within his or herself. After all, some people can travel to the most exotic worlds and want everything to be like home. They stay in hotels that suggest home, sleep in beds that suggest home, and have encounters with people who come from home. However for adult learners, being away from home does seem to offer the opportunity of swimming in new waters, and making different choices as to how to deal with the sharks and the dolphins. Such choice is not always available to children at school. Yet if the experience of being in graduate school is a positive one, if one really becomes a student again, not just in registering as one but becoming one, then, in a sense, there is a chance to renew oneself: to grow — to become — to develop. What else is learning?

> ELAINE SPEAKS: Life back at school is: time spent as a graduate student; everything else is merely a slice away from that [i.e. time taken away from being a graduate student]. To others around us it may appear as though we have become completely self-centered. The writing, thinking, never stops; your thoughts may temporarily go underground but resurface at any moment. You take every opportunity to engage everyone around you in your research. And somehow everything relates back to your research; my family is sick of it, even my books in my study wind their way into every room of the house. One thing is certain; I have started to become curious again, devoted to and fixated on my new found reading and research, like a child with a favorite plaything.

Cassie echoes some of Elaine's sentiments but she also alerts us to the fact that although, somewhat ironically, a teacher spends a large part of his/her life in school, this does not necessarily mean he/she has the opportunity to learn within the boundaries of the school walls.

> CASSIE SPEAKS: I had forgotten what it feels like to struggle with such uncertainty. My learning this term has been like going over hills and valleys. Some days I wake up to solve one problem and then I discover that this has opened me up to search for more answers. I have always thought of myself as a lifelong learner . . . going back as a graduate student, however, has a certain quality about it that is different from being in school as teacher. I don't know, in some ways it's as if I'm being pushed into a relationship with self, yet I'm the one doing the pushing. Maybe that is why time has a different feel to it; because, in a funny way, I am forced to live with myself. Weekends are no longer distinct from the rest of the week; it is all the same, sort of like my time as a very young child when all the world was mine. At school, as teacher, time has a busy-ness to it; the children take me away from myself, and my own learning, because they need so much of me. So, it is an adjustment to spend much of my time with myself and my own questions. It is a privilege, a gift, to be back at graduate school

> and as much as I love teaching I know I will never have this time to learn with such depth. Life's not like that — this is the detour.

Perhaps those who would be educated must struggle with uncertainty. In fact, the struggle with uncertainty may be what makes learning possible. For Cassie, a return to graduate school has meant a return to the uncertainty about learning she faced as a young child. Perhaps mental tangles would be easier to deal with if we could accept uncertainty as an inevitable part of the learning process.

Ellen also seems to find freedom to learn in a way that is quite different from when she was in the classroom as a teacher. In educational circles, there is much talk about the need for the teacher to be a learner along with her students. After speaking with Cassie and Ellen, I question how realistic is it to place a teacher in a position of "owning her learning" when she is responsible for the learning of the whole class. What may be the difference then between being in school as teacher and being in school as adult student?

> LESLEY SPEAKS: As teachers, we are accustomed to school; yet, the experience of teaching is different from being a graduate student back in school. It is probably good to have the experience of being a student again. I had forgotten about the power structure in our institutions of learning. Sitting in this desk takes me back — takes me back to being a student. Sometimes I feel helpless. I know just how it is children may feel because I'm now the student!

Even with "empowerment" being the workhorse noun of the nineties, I have to wonder what power a student has in our school. I also wonder about the power, or lack of power, that an adult learner has. On returning to school, do adult learners have to relinquish the power they may have gained after leaving school the first time? Being an adult student, places us, metaphorically speaking, on the other side of the fence. Becoming an adult student can become a chance to examine our assumptions regarding the whole school process, as well as a chance to consider who we are in the stories we live and tell.

For all intents and purposes, being back at graduate school has opened my eyes to my own history, and to the intense love of knowledge I possessed as a child. Some people, like Goldberg, whom I cited above, have a love of learning that seems passionate, open. My desire to learn, my commitment to learning is equally passionate, but quiet. For some people, such as Ellen, Cassie, Kerry, and Elaine, graduate school may be a chance to bring this love of learning forth.

So far, I have mainly alluded to the experience of graduate school as being a chance to become richer — to enlarge a life — to develop relationships with self and others, yet it would seem that some do not experience it this way. Leanne is very much aware that she is "prepared against surprise". She claims that her success actually depends on how well she goes about it, how well she learns to play the 'game'. She refers to this as doing the "studenting thing". She candidly asserts that she is willing to play the game — to get the nines, to get the scholarships, to get the university job. Ben, and many of the graduate students with whom I also spoke, were primarily interested in gathering information and learning from the "experts" during their time as graduate students.

Throughout this chapter I have been flirting with the word "student". It would seem that one can be a student without being a learner. How adults come back to school may largely depend on their intentions and what they believe being a student entails. I wonder just how much the experiences of graduate school are determined by different intentions. Perhaps some students look for a journey more in keeping with a preplanned package tour.

They want the tour to be predictable — finite. They want a ticket to a job. Others may not want the prepackaged tour. Instead they want a relationship that will help them find out who they are in relation to their studies. They have a commitment to ideas. Yet if one's intention is "education", in the deep sense of the word, one would expect to accomplish more than just mental operations embedded in a series of tasks, involving little personal engagement or commitment. The way adults experience graduate school may best be understood from the way they enter graduate school. I think there is a world of difference between being and doing, learning to get information and learning as a transformation.

Signposts to the Text

In this chapter I began with a personal story of an adult learning experience that was fraught with tension, principally because of the residues of my childhood experiences of learning. Old feelings seemed to echo in the new experience of learning as a graduate student. This awareness grew as I engaged in conversations with the participants in the study. Many of these graduate students, too, shared feelings ranging from fear and uncertainty through to joy and a renewed sense of passion for learning. Had they been numb and mute for so many years because they could not speak of what the child within themselves knew?

The connection between the present-day experiences of adult learners and their childhood learning experiences suggests to me that learning may not be quite so distinct and so different from each other as some curriculum theorists would have us believe. An imposed child-adult dichotomy undergirds many theories of curriculum development, and ultimately repudiates the experiences of children in the ideal of "the educated adult". Interestingly, while the participants in my study were teachers, it was only their own return to school as learners that created the awareness of the similarities, rather than the differences, between learners of different ages. For many, this awareness would not have been possible without the chance to share through the telling of stories of personal experience.

In focusing on the similarities rather than on the differences in the experiences of child and adult learners, I realized I was also questioning the kind of knowledge that our education system validates, for both child and adult learners. Graduate school seemed to offer some learners the chance to exorcize the over-reliance on objective ways of knowing that seem to permeate much of curriculum theory. A number of graduate students expressed that this new experience of learning had taken them back to the curiosity and play of their childhood. Perhaps the return to graduate school may offer a return to the childhood sense of self and a return to a way of learning that is far less fragmented. For some graduate students, study may provide a time for mending the culturally imposed child-adult dichotomy. For others it may not. But I believe, to understand ourselves fully, we need to face the discontinuity between our childhood selves and what our cultural history provides for us as models of adulthood.

The following points have come to light in the process of doing this investigation thus far:

- The culture of the West has constructed a child/adult duality in which the child is often inferior.

- This view of the child as somehow deficient permeates our educational theory.
- An examination of the learning experience of adults through eyes unblinkered by presuppositions suggests that the child as learner may be active within the adult.
- The duality of child/adult can result in miseducation of the child.

CHAPTER 7

When Curriculum Becomes a Stranger

Childhood In a Kit

I begin with a true story. It is true in the sense that it happened. I was walking to campus for an early morning meeting. New flowers punctuated nearly every yard. Rich hues of yellow, orange and red splattered playfully across the soft ground, replacing winter's seemingly impenetrable cover of snow. I felt the soft spring breeze sweep across my face, gently, like a mother's hand brushing sleep from her child's eyes. The seasons had folded one into the other, like the body of a mother into her unborn child.

The voice of a small child interrupted my thoughts. "What's a stranger?" She was so close to me that I had to wonder just how she got there. And indeed, how I had managed not to mow her down like some weed in the crack of the sidewalk? That look, her question, and the ease with which she slipped her hand in mine as she tried to get me to walk her to school lingers still.

This little girl's question is an interesting one. Through speaking further with her, I gathered she may have been confused by the way the concept "stranger" had been presented to her at school. I wondered whether she had been introduced to the concept of stranger through a kit. If so, I could perhaps understand her confusion. As a teacher, I had been obliged to attend a workshop on the use of such a kit. While the concept of "stranger" is a complex one, kits such as the one that was the focus of the workshop did little to address the complexity in any comprehensive way. Like many of my colleagues, I chose not to use this sort of kit. Instead, I tried to integrate concepts such as the one of stranger into a curriculum built out of the children's experience of their everyday lives. This teacher practice is not always appreciated or endorsed by those who mandate school curricula. Many of us have grown up with the notion that we can reason our way out of the problems of life and devices such as kits offer us the assurance that this is so. Workshops on effective teaching and assertive discipline are examples of the "rational" approach to teaching.

The use of kits is not necessarily a harmful practice. Often the intentions behind them are good. Kits may help children understand and label their experience. However, the little girl's question made me wonder if such technical and generalized approaches to issues thought to affect children really do help them and their teachers make sense of the complexity of the life world in which they are already embedded.

Kits can be useful but they are often, at best, merely surface outlines of the complex reality we experience, much like a water beetle appears on the surface of a pond, seemingly unaware of the watery realms beneath its legs.

I see the use of kits as a symptom of a larger problem within the traditional curriculum of Western schooling. Devices such as kits and other 'teacher-proof" curriculum materials exemplify the way curricula mandated by the state have been traditionally used to control what is taught, how it is taught, and to whom it is taught — that is, to what is conceptualized of children — and to implement social policies. In this scheme, teachers often become the hand maidens of the state, sometimes though not always, unwittingly implementing social policies that may undermine the possibility for critical thinking in our schools. Other scholars in the field of curriculum studies, for example McLaren (1989), suggest that in schools and teacher education programs:

> . . . an undue emphasis is placed on training teachers to be managers and implementers of preordained content, and on methods courses that rarely provide students with opportunity to analyze the ideological assumptions and underlying interests that structure the way teaching is taught. (p. 2)

Other scholars such as Clandinin and Connelly (1995) have shown us, specifically through teacher stories, that many teachers feel repressed, and often oppressed, by policies which come down "the conduit". The work of Clandinin and Connelly focuses, although not exclusively, on oppressive social policies which affect teachers. However, social policies that affect children, specifically as they are implemented through specialized institutions such as schools, are still relatively in unchartered terrain. As Smith (1991) says:

> . . . how is it that in spite of enormous public expenditure on formal educational programs for children and good rhetoric speaking on children's behalf, in actuality children are the most frequently abused and neglected of all the world's citizens, in countries like the United States and Canada as well as in the third World. (p. 188)

The ways in which the state implements constraining social policy through curricula is particularly important if one is interested, as I am, in how children in the West have been oppressed. In the case of the little girl who asked me about strangers, the oppression is covert, not overt. Lessons in fearing strangers subdue her previous inclination to trust everyone, which she shows by the way she slips her hand into mine. The kit, as a quick device, derogates the child's understanding of the world as a friendly place. Curricula are community designs for a social order which the state produces to shape its citizens. Designs are structures which unfortunately can utilize kits to that end.

Facing the little girl on the sidewalk that morning, I found myself uncomfortably reliving the dilemma with which I had often struggled as a teacher, that is, the dilemma surrounding the transmission of cultural attitudes and values. I wondered how I should behave towards the little girl so that I might not undermine what her teacher and parents had already told her and, at the same time, not betray my own beliefs about the questionable practice of identifying strangers as givers of harm. I knew that it is not usually strangers who harm children but those who are often closest to them: their parents, their extended family, or their family's friends.

Superficially, a kit such as the one about strangers may appear beneficial for children in our schools. Yet what is being transmitted through the use of such a kit and to what purpose? Ostensibly, the purpose of the kit is to prevent harm delivered by strangers. It functions, however, to deflect attention from the harm done by parents, family, and paid attendants. And it does so because parenthood and parenting is deemed sacrosanct. Honor thy father, the bible says. "This refusal to acknowledge the consequences of former harm and injury to the child permeates our society and is reinforced by religious teachings. For thousands of years, all religious institutions have exhorted the faithful to respect their parents" (Miller, 1990b, p. 32).

Hendrick (1994) points out, " First, the history of children and childhood, is inescapably inseparable from the history of social policy" (p. xii) and that the general effect of social policies has been to create a perception of children as predominantly ignorant, dependent, vulnerable, untutored and very often threatening (p. xii). A look at the work of Hendrick (1994) allows us to explore ideas about the social construction of childhood. His deeply caring and compassionate work on the history of children, child welfare, and the social construction of childhood in England has resonance here in Canada because many of our ideas and our institutions have been imported from, and modelled on, the British system.

The concept of childhood as a separate state comes late in human history. The Industrial Revolution in nineteenth century England as Hendrick (1994) and Aries (1972) point out, indicates that childhood as a distinct stage in the human life cycle did not exist. With industrialization, the custom of informally educating the young at home and through the local community gave way to the formal education of schools. The state now became an active participant in the education of children. Childhood was socially constructed to meet the needs and demands of industrialization. Hendrick remarks:

> . . . the making of childhood into a very specific kind of age-graded and age-related condition went through several stages, involving several different processes. Each new construction, one often overlapping with the other, has been described here in the appropriate chronological order as: the natural child, the Romantic child, the evangelical child, the factory child, the delinquent child, the schooled child and the psycho-medical child . . . the introduction and gradual consolidation of compulsory schooling confirmed the trend towards the creation of the innocence. This understanding of the 'nature' of childhood was then subjected to scientific scrutiny and elaborated upon through further description and explanation by the Child Study movement. (Hendrick, 1994, p. 37)

Like textbooks and readers that came before, contemporary curricular devices such as kits are developed with a certain view of "the child" and childhood. However, many kits go beyond mere literacy and the acquisition of special skills by implementing various social policies which focus on issues affecting children's wellbeing that is child welfare, child abuse and health practices. So what is the problem with this?

Nineteenth and twentieth century reformers have campaigned for policies which ensure that children are protected. But, as Hendrick (1994) reminds us, certain features of policies that purport to protect children have also been historically responsible for doing them harm. Hendrick gives examples such as the "Edwardian concern with 'national efficiency,' and the perennial interest in social discipline, the stability of the family, and an appropriately educated labour force" (p. xiii). The concern with social discipline, for example, has sometimes meant that children are censured, ridiculed, or otherwise punished because they are children. Schooling today may not always be so distant from such Edwardian objectives. Barbara, an undergraduate student in a language learning class I teach, recently wrote this story. Her story is reminiscent of the Edwardian notion of childhood we read about in novels such as David Copperfield. Barbara entitled her story of schooling, *A Blue Bird.*

Our classroom was a perfect square with one doorway and two windows.

Desks were arranged in straight lines. Five desks across and six down. They were assigned to us on the first day of class. You did not change places! We had rules in our school.

We had dress codes. Girls wore dresses, boys slacks and long sleeved shirts. No T-shirts, shorts or runners were allowed.

The teachers followed code too. They wore only dark colors black, brown, navy blue with no accent and no pretty jewellery.

We followed a schedule. At 8:45 the bell rang and we ran to line up to enter school. At 8:50 we were allowed in if our lines were straight, one for boys and one for girls. By 8:55 we would be seated. At nine o'clock sharp, our door closed.

Once settled, we were instructed to stand for morning prayer, then seated. At 9:10 the morning announcements, made by the principal, would be heard throughout the school on the P. A. system. Classes would soon begin, each one lasting 30 minutes. Subjects taught were Arithmetic, Language Arts, Spelling, Religion, Social Studies, Health, Science, French and Physical Education. At 10:15 we had recess for 15 minutes that included line up time to enter the school.

Expectations in class were easy. Sit up straight, keep your head facing front. Fold your hands together on top of your desk, visible. Feet held apart and square under your desk. If you had a question your arm was raised straight above your head, held high, then you waited, until you were acknowledged and spoken to. You were not to leave your desk for any reasons.

The teacher lectured in front of our class. Sometimes she would walk up and down the aisles to see how work was progressing. We always had lots of exercises to complete. If you were slow, you stayed after school to complete class work.

Any disruption to the class due to talking out of turn, not answering properly or getting out of your desk would find you in trouble. Usually students were sent to the corners to face the wall. Some students became permanent fixtures with their desks moved up against the chalkboard. A student rarely dared to turn their head once seated there.

The occasion when I was bad in class still remains with me. My punishment was innovative. To kneel in a praying position on the heat register located at the back of the class. The register was about 36 inches high and about the same in length. Another boy shared in the punishment. We climbed up, not knowing. We positioned our knees on the grate and prayed. After awhile, we squirmed. Noticing that I had moved slightly off the grill, the teacher made me redo the punishment over recess. I had difficulty not moving so I again tried over part of the lunch hour. I had ample time to reflect.

Of course, not everyone had these types of experiences in class. Red birds were too smart to get into trouble. Blue birds only occasionally. Yellow birds were the real bad ones.

Heywood (1988), another historian, supports Hendrick's view that policies for children were not necessarily made with the children's best interests at heart. For example, when industrialists in the middle of the nineteenth century began paying cash incentives for high production, children could not participate because they lacked the stamina to keep up with production by machines. Because of their lower output, child workers ceased to be considered economically useful. They became superfluous. Industry needed a place to "park" children until they were old enough to be workers. Public schools were the answer. In Heywood's analysis, the mandate of the schools was to keep the children off the streets in order to train them to be good workers, but not to think for themselves.

Peikoff and Brickey (1991) state that from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century in Canada, it was a time in which social reformers, as in England, devoted more energy to caring for children than in any other period. However, they demonstrate that policy initiatives directed to child labour and compulsory education did not emerge because of enlightened attitudes towards children. Rather, the consequences of the emergence of industrial capitalism was largely responsible for the ideological change that transformed children from little adults into precious creatures in need of special attention and care. Heywood (1988) also argues that economic factors underlie the development of public schools as a better place for working class children. He says, that "from the *instituteurs*, the industrial lobby hoped, they [children] would acquire a basic instruction in the three R's, and, most importantly, learn the discipline and values that would make them 'good workers'," (p. 322).

The study of the history of childhood is the story of how adults have viewed and treated children. De Mause, a psycho-historian, states that "the history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have just begun to awaken" (1975, p. 85). De Mause claims that the further we look back in history the worse the treatment of children becomes. Aries (1972) and Sommerville (1990) have painted varying pictures of how people in the past have treated children: from under-protection to over-protection; from being little adults to being virtually a different species; from being innately evil to being paragons of innocence.

Most historians agree that throughout history children have been abused and neglected. As long as we only deal superficially with the way children are treated in our society, the nightmare will continue. Perhaps as the little girl's question that began this chapter suggests, learning to be made strangers to ourselves and each other is the biggest part of the nightmare.

Reflecting on the little girl's question and curricular directions available through kits led me to consider what it is really like to be a child living in our Western culture. One is inevitably concerned over the messages children receive about being children and becoming adults, about the way messages presume differences between child and adult which make us forget that identity continuously unfolds throughout our lifetime. Orwell (1953) points out:

> . . . the child lives in a sort of alien under-water world which we can only penetrate by memory or divination. Our chief clue is the fact that we were once children ourselves, and many people appear to forget the atmosphere of their own childhood almost entirely. (p. 59)

As I have suggested in chapter six, becoming an adult in this culture may mean becoming estranged from one's own childhood, and the curriculum we learn at school often reinforces and perpetuates the estrangement. The little girl I met reveals the essence of this separation.

The Child Remembered

How wonderful and yet strange it is to be a child! To find oneself as a child in a marvelous world that is without history, a world ripe with potential. One's task as a child is to make sense of a pregiven world to make sense of its established social patterns, culture and traditions. The world gives one no status except as being an infant member of a social group. It gives no power except that which is given him/her by adults. As Schutz suggests:

> Any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and

> unquestionable guide in all situations which normally occur within the social world. (Schutz, 1971, p. 95)

While I largely agree with Schutz, I question whether a new member of a group always accepts without question the pregiven cultural patterns.

A story of an experience from Cara, a graduate student, exemplifies both a child's lack of status and power, her acquiescence to cultural patterns and her need to make sense of situations that unfold about her.

My Grandfather stood before me, his rail-like frame almost grazing the full height of the room. His cool clear eyes turning to ice, focused with laser-like sharpness, no longer on my mother, but on me. "Honestly Emma where are her manners?" His question seemed to hover above me, suspended in air on a fragile thread.

My Mother's eyes avoided my gaze. Instantly, I knew that she would not be defending me. And in that moment, she looked awkward, quiet, miniscule; her eyes veiled in a shroud of complacency. Only moments before, I had felt so invincible, so full of life itself, and this vitality had carried me forward as I burst into that room. I, the room-buster, child of five, had forgotten my manners. And with eyes much too wide, and tongue wagging tales to tell, had broken Grandfather's golden rules:

Silence is golden.
Children should be seen and not heard.
Do not interrupt adults who are in conversation.

In enthusiasm over the little creature I had just seen outside, I had forgotten the rules, as sometimes I was wont to do. My grandfather's tongue *was like a whip: Did I know I was a rude child? Rude to interrupt grown-ups when they are speaking? Rude to butt in without being announced? Rude because I should know better?*

RUDE, RUDE, RUDE.

Well, what did I have to say for myself my Grandfather bellowed? I stammered. "I" — "I" In a short space of time I had lost my I. Then my anger seemed to reclaim it, and I felt myself becoming real again. With red face and defiant eyes and all the strength in me I returned that ice blue glare. My words tumbled out of me: "Maybe I was rude, but it's still not fair for you to yell at me," I retorted. "Little people have feelings too."

A long silence ensued. Those freshly spoken words sat on me like paste, following me like a snail's trail as I slowly made my way out to the car. I glanced back, hoping, thinking, wishing, that someone would follow me.

I wondered what would happen next, for I knew I had broken yet another golden rule; I had lost my temper. I felt sad, yet somehow big — full of the truth I knew I had spoken only moments before. Finally my mother appeared. I pretended not to notice her as she hurried down the path towards the car. Perhaps she noted my indifference, perhaps not. She framed her words rather carefully, explaining that all would be fine again provided I apologized to my Grandfather immediately. I looked at her briefly and then with my index finger I began to focus on creating different patterns with the little dots that suddenly became noticeable in the upholstered ceiling just above me. (A child remembers)

This story calls into being what it feels like to be little, full of curiosity and wonder, but running amok of what seems to be the inexplicable rules adults have made to govern behavior. What we learn about ourselves, others, and our proper place in the scheme of things is not evidently always good for us. As a small child, not only could Cara not interrupt her grandfather and her mother, but she could not question them in an overt way. And so in school, perhaps children learn not to question the teacher. Fine (1987) and Gardner (1991) are but two who remind us that school is often a place where serious conversation or questions are deemed inappropriate.

That chance meeting with the little girl on the sidewalk brought me back to the story of my own childhood, to its loneliness and pain, and then it made me think how our school curricula embody and promotes Western developmental ideals.

Children often wrestle with profundity. I remembered that as a young child I struggled with the meaning of, and significance in, Remembrance Day. There seemed to be so much sadness and quiet just before that day and on that day. I really did not know the reason for the veil of silence: it was a mystery. I thought about how school reinforced this mystery.

At school we colored poppies. I remember one of my classmates getting into trouble because he colored his poppy yellow and not red. It really was not until much later that the symbolism of the red poppy was made clear to me, after I finally summoned up the courage to ask my father. He told me a beautiful story about a young man who was a soldier and a poet. Because he was a poet, he could put into words the sadness of war and the great human suffering that everyone feels no matter which country eventually wins the war. My father said that each poppy represents the blood of someone killed in the war, be they father, son, or brother in someone's family, somewhere around the world.

Suddenly I understood the reason for the great silence that blanketed the Legion Hall every year and I also understood why I had been called a disrespectful child because I had drawn a happy face on one of those felt poppies handed out at school. Looking back, I now realize that my father had a different perspective to the dominant sacred story of war. He saw its suffering, not its glory. He also had a different perspective on life, and a seamless view of personhood or identity, in which I share. The view of personhood or identity as continuously evolving throughout the life cycle underlies my dissertation.

As a child, I often felt like a prop in a play someone else (the teacher) had written. A five year old whom I recently met had a similar experience of school. She was telling her younger sister what school is all about: "Well, you sit on the rug. You color at your desk and then you sit on the rug and sometimes there are stories and you sit on the rug for stories." When her little sister asked, "Why do you sit on the rug?" the older child replied, "Silly, you just sit on the rug." The younger child, perhaps thinking this unusual, said "Is it a magic rug?" "No," replied the other, "It is just a rug for kids to sit on. Big people like teachers and stuff sit on chairs."

The five-year-old girl had to engage in an activity — sitting on the rug — that she made sense of in the best way she could. Sometimes, however, school children are forced to engage in activities that are so beyond their experience that they can make no sense of them at all. The little girl in the beginning of this chapter had her problems making sense of those in our midst who are our strangers.

When I was teaching grade two, a citizenship ceremony took place in the gymnasium at our school. The whole school was asked to attend on rather short notice. My class did not understand the concept of citizenship. There was not adequate time to discuss such a concept with them or to try to build the concept of citizenship through their experience. Neither was there time for a discussion among staff about whether it would be appropriate for children of this age to attend. Many of the grade two, grade one, and kindergarten pupils had difficulty sitting still through the ceremony. It occurred to me that my role was simply one of keeping the children quiet so that our school could announce that such a prestigious ceremony took place at our school. As far as I could tell this incident did little except give the children the message that their role is "to be seen and not heard," a cultural tradition, which, many would argue, is no longer operating in contemporary child-rearing practices. While teachers cannot be expected to explain the reasons for everything they do, it seems to me that this five year old girl had difficulty making sense of her world for the same reasons my grade two students did: children are given little say apart from what adults grant them. Yet it would have been helpful to this five-year-old's cognitive development to know — or to be able to ask — the teacher why children sat on the rug and to that of my grade two children to have a discussion about citizenship. If we are open to listening to children's questions and struggling with their tangles and confusions, we acknowledge them as being reasonable beings and beings capable of reason. Indeed we may even learn from them!

Perhaps, as I suggested earlier, in looking into the face of the little girl whom I met on the sidewalk, I also remembered how I felt when, as teacher, I was expected to carry on traditions, or enforce rules that made no sense to me; or, worse, that made me feel as though I had somehow abandoned the child I once was. To become an adult and a teacher, I was trained, and had trained myself, to forget the atmosphere of my own childhood. Learning to be and being an adult in this culture often means becoming estranged from one's own childhood. It means turning from our past as experienced towards a present that is outside our felt experience. We become an adult when we disconnect from the child we were; we arrive at what is named adulthood when we forget the journey we have been on. Perhaps being an adult means no longer asking oneself where one came from, where one is going, or who one is going to be. The "not-yet adult" and "adult" categories of Western stage development theory may contribute to a polarized and oppositional relationship between adult and child. After all, once adulthood is reached we know who we are; was not our childhood the preparation for that goal?

"What Will You Be?"

They never stop asking me,
"What will you be?-
A doctor, a dancer,
A diver at sea?"

They never stop bugging me:
"What will you be?"
As if they expect me to
Stop being me.

When I grow up I'm going to be a Sneeze,
And sprinkle Germs on all my Enemies.

When I grow up I'm going to be a Toad,
And dump on Silly Questions in the road.

When I grow up, I'm going to be a Child.
I'll Play the whole darn day and drive them Wild.

(Dennis Lee, 1977, p. 41)

Not so very long ago, I was involved in a situation that brought me closer to understanding the little girl's questions. A close friend of mine was overcome with sadness in hearing the following news bulletin in the dead of winter. A dog had been hit by a car and was left to die at the side of the road. A passerby stopped to throw a blanket on the dog but many people passed by both on foot and in automobiles without stopping. Finally, someone stopped to attend to the dog but by that time the dog's paws were frozen to the ground. It is likely that the dog died not because it sustained fatal injuries by being hit by a car, but because it had been left to freeze to death.

My friend relayed this news report to me through tears. I immediately became angry, spouting off about the great inhumanity in our society, about how we treat helpless creatures and children, about the action that must be taken, about the hopelessness of the situation. My friend interrupted my tirade, saying "Just let me cry for the dog."

I have thought about this incident many times because other ugly moments remind me of it and because my reaction of over analysis of life situations appears to be a typical one. Possibly my friend has the right idea: first be aware of one's own immediate feelings (those which speak to us in the moment). It seems to me, based on my own experience as both a student and teacher, that traditional school curricula favours abstract thought, analytic reasoning and linguistic ability over the affective and perceptual domain. I have learned well to do this as I analysed the solution rather than responded to the immediate feelings of sadness. Turnbull (1983) suggests that, in other cultures such as in the mbuti tribe, the affective domain is much more widely understood, and given much more prominence in every stage of the life cycle and in the educational system than it is in our own (p.

18). As a result, the actions of the members of the mbuti tribe are not separate from their life experience. In their culture childhood is not regarded as a separate state. Unlike in the West, there is no abstract or oppositional relationship between child and adult because each individual life is part of the endless cycle of life.

Along with teaching children to favor their emotional responses less and to be made accepting of analytic responses, in Western education we teach them to be passive, not to question authority, and, perhaps, eventually not to question much at all. Lindfors (1987) focuses on the mismatch between the curious nature of children and the tendency of traditional classrooms not to sanction curiosity and questions of a more personal nature. She cites examples from both informal exercises and classroom observations regarding the kinds of questions asked by preschool-kindergarten children, primary children, and intermediate-level children. The questions at each level were categorized into the following three groups:

(1) Curiosity: Does not focus on satisfying any outside source. (2) Procedural: Focuses on satisfying an external source; helps one do what one is "supposed" to do. (3) Social-interactional: a question form functioning mainly to initiate or maintain or clarify a relationship. (Lindfors, 1987, p. 288)

The results are rather disturbing:

> Of the 159 preschool-kindergarten questions analyzed, approximately 45 percent (almost half) were social in nature, approximately 33 percent (one-third) were curiosity questions, and approximately 23 percent (less than one-fourth) were procedural. The situation changed dramatically at primary level. Here, of a total of 253 questions analyzed, the curiosity questions comprised only 19 percent and social only 14 percent, while procedural questions soared to 66 percent (almost two-thirds) of the total. The situation was similar at intermediate level, with 16 percent of the total (116) being curiosity questions, another 16 percent being

> social, and a staggering 68 percent being procedural. (Lindfors, 1987, p. 288)

The numbers in Lindfor's study figure importantly in my life. My feelings of being a stranger on much of the educational terrain I have travelled may be largely attributed to the fact that on the one hand I have been educated to forget as Lindfor's shows 'the atmosphere of my own childhood' and that, on the other hand, childhood is a difficult time to know. As Orwell puts it "In studying childhood — or teaching children — one is up against the very great difficulty of knowing what a child really feels and thinks" (p. 59). But is it not difficult to really know how anyone feels? After all, are we not all, in one way or another, strangers to ourselves and to each other? I wonder if we do not often think that children's feelings are so different than our own because our cultural history has told us that this is so. Perhaps this is why in our modern Western culture nothing is less explored and less valued than the child's point of view.

CHAPTER 8

Hearing Through Silence: Lullabies of Myth

This dissertation has been about trying to imagine or view children differently — not from above — not objectified, as has been quite typically the case in our society and in our traditional approaches to the schooling of children. The view I am suggesting would require a rethinking of the place of childhood in the human life cycle, imagining child and adult behavior as interrelated and cyclical. Ultimately, this means rethinking current views of childhood in education to include the child's point of view. It is, however, difficult to integrate something that is not acknowledged as important.

What might an alternative view of childhood in education look like?

Changing Cultural Scripts

While acknowledging the natural polarity between the positions of child and adult, it is not necessary to posit any position of superiority within that duality. Within the adult rests a child; within the child rests an adult. It is possible to attend to difference without attributing dominance to either position. It is possible to respond to similarities in the rhythm of each position.

What must change in order to move toward alternative views is the relationship between children and adults as it is portrayed in Western mythology, and how such understandings are played out in our education system. "The commercial and cult storytellers . . . collaborate through the manner in which they undermine the autonomy of teachers and children, who are regarded as passive recipients of cultural goods that are deemed (from above) appropriate for their work and development" (Zipes, 1995, p. 4). For example, stories like *Hansel and Gretel*, *Cinderella* and *Snow White* are interpreted within the dominant view of childhood as distinct from adulthood, with the child ever in the position of victim, gullible loser or total innocent. More recently, and perhaps more telling, films like *Home Alone*, *House Arrest* and *The Exorcist* reveal children as evil or as diabolical, with adults their unwitting victims. The success of each of these stories depends on an inherent oppositionality in the relationship between child and adult, a casting of each as strange to the other.

For example, even the way folktales are told hides possibilities for rethinking the relationship of childhood and adulthood. The child is ever the victim in one light. Hansel and Gretel were victims of a cruel step mother and yet they acted on the belief that it would be possible to survive in spite of the step mother's belief that they could not. The children refused to be the victims. The lines between superior and inferior become blurred. The children return to the father with the resources to care for him.

If we remember the story of Snow White from the view I am suggesting then we find possibilities to attend to differences not to hierarchies. For example, Snow White finds companionship in unexpected places, with dwarfs in forests, where differences are valued and she finds there that the power of this truth vanquishes evil.

Perhaps we need to be ever careful of dominant cultural scripts as we tell our fairy tales and create new tales. Perhaps we also need to be careful as we listen to children's telling of these tales and as teachers help them to articulate their understandings. As Zipes suggests,

> The process of learning how to tell a story is a process of empowerment. We all want to narrate our lives, but very few of us have been given the techniques and insights that can help us form plots to reach our goals. We need to learn strategies of narration when we are very young in order to grasp that we can become our own narrators, the storytellers of our lives. (p. 4)

This is an invitation to enable children to question cultural scripts, an invitation for educators to view childhood as an open-ended process of becoming.

Changing Daily Scripts

Within the dominant cultural script there are other stories but they are not understood to be as powerful. If we listen, we hear those stories of children and educators who question their process of becoming. The stories to which I refer concern the lives of the children in classrooms engaging with the world as powerful, responsible and active in addressing the problems of the world around them.

Consider the story of eleven year old Catherine Wiebe (Globe and Mail, June 14, 1996) who spoke up against a major toy manufacturer at the annual meeting regarding a doll "Clever Cutie" which stereotypically portrayed women as mindless users of phones, hairbrushes and hairdryers.

My friend, Laura, at age 15, wrote to the prime minister to ask why her mother, a single mom, could not get financial help to build a house.

She subsequently received a very positive reply from the prime minister and her mother got help to build her house.

One of my students, seven year old McKenzie, learned through the newspaper that Crayola, a popular crayon manufacturer, had asked adults about removing some old colours from their crayon boxes. McKenzie questioned why only adults had been consulted; why had no children been asked for their opinions? McKenzie got her classmates to write letters to Crayola to protest their new colour strategy. Another classmate suggested making a tape of children's opinions about the Crayola move, reasoning that "You know adults. They never listen to children" (MM, personal communication, March 11, 1991).

Here are some samples of the letters written by McKenzie and her classmates:

Dear crayola canada,

We are wondering Why you Went to the parent's and not the kid's when you decided to change the color's? COuld you please keep all the color's in because when you want to go draw a picture with a rainbow in it you will not have the right Colors.

Dear Crayola, Canada

I am writing to you on be half of the following Maise, Raw umber, Goldenrod, Blue grey, Cadet blue, Orange yellow, Yellow orange and Orange red I am very, very, very Mad!!! We think it shoud be upto the kids and not adults, Put in Dandelion, Wild strawberry, Virid tangerene, fuchsia, Teal blue, Royal purple, Jungle green and Sky blue But Keep in the old colers.

Dear Crayola Canada.
Why are you taking out the Good Crayons?

I think you Should Keep them in But
If you want to Put the New Crayons
in you Might have to Make a Bigger
Box.

Dear crayola

Yes put the new colors in but please keep the old ones in because this class likes them and room 18 is not very happy whith you if you are melting the old ones then you are killing the enviroment

Dear crayola

to whom it may concern we are Wondering why you went to the Parents and not the children when you decided to Change colors? Could you Please keep all the colors in because we are mad at you you Should ask the kids.

Adults can learn from children. These children's stories and letters are powerful because they create, in adults, a sense of wishing for that same power in their own childhood (or adulthood). This is how I react to the stories of children.

Implications of these changes

What do such stories have to do with education? Schools are places shared by adults and children, but many schools may not be serving as places of opening for children or their teachers. Rather, in many ways, schools serve to "shape" children, to "model" them and to "prepare" them for the future. This goal of schooling is to reduce questioning of a curious and social nature. Many schools and teachers are not open to the possibilities presented by children as they create their own world and their own questions about the world and their position in it. If schools can become places for examining and listening to the cultural and daily scripts we live by, then both children and adults (teachers) may be able to rethink the oppositional relationships so that the silence of the child does not become the silence of the adult.

Schools are places, not just for children, but also for teachers. Both children and teachers need to be in a position to understand and question the social norms which structure and guide their daily lessons. If young teachers, however, are selected to become teachers because of their success in our current education system, how can the cycle of silence be broken? How can young teachers who do not understand their own authority to question, who no longer have questions and who no longer ask difficult questions, create a space which promotes a questioning stance, encourages questioning and permits difficult questions to be raised?

CHAPTER 9

Creating Spaces for Possibilities

It's in every one of us, to be wise,
find your heart, open up both your eyes.
We can all know everything,
without ever knowing why.
It's in every one of us, to be wise.

- *Traditional Folk Song*

How can the cycle of silences be broken? How can teachers create spaces in which possibilities are invited? This chapter pulls together the strands which trace my web of inquiry. It offers an awareness of the fragmentation of the individuated self as pervasive in our culture, specifically the child/adult dichotomy. It enables me to respond to the process of inquiry through continued use of questions as tools which allow a search for a way out of the cyclical silences imposed by culturally dominant discourses. This chapter further offers possible significance for children, adults and teachers, within the practice of teacher education, and promotes integration of these new understandings into my own practice. Perhaps it will enable others to do the same.

Becoming Aware of Fragmentation

Referring to the beginning of this text, this inquiry grew out of desire for a deeper understanding of human experience, in particular children's experiences of schooling. It began with a lack in my comprehension of the silences of my own childhood. I felt a sense of alienation not only as a child, but also as a teacher in educational contexts. Awareness of the potential for alienation is a significant recurring theme in this dissertation, with its specific focus on the child/adult dichotomy as one manifestation of the individuated self. Alienation may result from an emphasis on difference, on being set apart or of being fragmented.

My first experience with difference and fragmentation was the abyss of my brother's institutionalization. The narrative of this experience, written through memories of myself as a ten year old child, was the genesis, the later motivation to inquiry into aspects of alienation within our culture. My growing awareness was the key strand in what has grown to be an interactive web of questions exploring the cyclical nature of identity within the context of schooling.

Questioning Enables the Search

I began by wondering:

- What is it like to be a child moving through school contexts?
- How does the way children learn echo in the learning of adults; then, reciprocally, how do adults (ie. teachers) shape the way children learn?
- Does a cultural attribution of differences between child and adult circumscribe the potential learning of individuals?

Questions made it possible to search for labels with which to voice unarticulated feelings of difference and fragmentation in schooling contexts. Questions became tools, and those tools enabled me to continue the search for a way out of the silences.

As a child I looked at the bare walls of the institution where my brother was housed. The walls gave no answers about experiences and maturing development for a child growing up. Where were the answers to my unvoiced questions? Silence grew on silence.

In Grade 3, I learned one way to draw a number line. My understanding of numbers was not to vary from that linear definition of what represents quantities and their relationships. I dared not break the silence and risk the slam of Mr. V's ruler on my desk.

Many years later, I was asked in a graduate class to fill in spaces which would indicate subjects in which we thought we were knowledgeable. In that moment, I remembered Mr. V, and the adult and child in me converged. I found myself wondering about boundaries: where does childhood end and adulthood begin? Later, I was to search for answers to this question in the literature focused on cultural notions of identity of "the self" which form the underpinnings of our pedagogy. Yet it was primarily through speaking with other graduate students in education that I realized the cyclical nature of identity, particularly the living cohesion between child and adult/teacher.

Consequently, rather than consciously selecting this research topic, the question of the cyclical nature of child/adult relationships had presented itself to me through my own return to school as a graduate student. Perhaps this is because a return to school as an adult gave me the chance to diverge from my usual role of teacher, allowing me glimpses and traces of how children's lives are storied. I found that by inquiring into the commonalities and differences in the experiences of child and adult learners, I was also inquiring into the assumptions that undergird the discourses in many theories of child development, and how these may actually constrain development. A sequential, linear, end-point view of human development does not enable us to understand the recursive experience of our becoming. In practical terms, the alternate process of reflexive questioning may infuse our teaching and learning with the potential ability to be thoughtful, responsive and understanding — as the Folk Song says: "to be wise".

In summary, these two dimensions: becoming aware of fragmentation and reflexive questioning (discovering that which often "hides in the light") comprise a recursive practice. This whole process of inquiry is interconnected and interactive and supports informed action.

Informed Action for my Practice as a University Teacher

While teaching undergraduate courses in the teacher education program, I continued to question. One of the issues presented as part of my first curriculum methods course was behavior management. It was difficult to teach this course without comprehending the complexity of behaviour management in the classroom. On the one hand, having been a teacher, I understood the challenges of behaviour management and the place of technique and strategies in curriculum. On the other hand, I felt terribly disheartened by the many primarily prescriptive procedures and recipes for controlling classroom behaviour. I decided to present the students with "real life" teaching scenarios based on my own experiences.

While an interesting discussion ensued regarding the use of techniques, I began to wonder how much the curriculum of our schooling engenders a dichotomy between child and adult. In the classroom situation many of the undergraduate students talked about incidents during which they felt they had been mistreated as children. Barbara told of kneeling on the heating vent as a form of punishment. It exemplified her perception of this feeling of mistreatment (Chapter 7). Experiences of mistreatment continue to pervade and echo within schooling, as teachers unquestioningly carry their silent memories into relationships with children.

Continued questioning may provide an opportunity to understand the process of becoming an adult who has integrated, rather than abandoned a child's sense of knowing. In the undergraduate classes I teach, I invite the students to explore personal stories of childhood and reflect on how these stories may have an impact on their teaching practice. Barbara shared her growing understanding of structure and routine in the classroom as well as the impact her story (chapter 7) had on her teaching philosophy and practice:

Karyn's Question: How did this event have an impact on your teaching practice?

Barbara's Response: Structure is a good point. I think it instilled in me the virtues of a routine. It is important to know the rules and play by them. I became afraid though to have my own thoughts and ideas. Somehow they were not good enough, or right. I had difficulty speaking in class and would not like to hand projects in or show my work unless somehow I knew it was perfect. I also found that I would defend or protect slower students in class and would associate with both the smart students and the slower students.

Karyn's Question: How do you feel about this now?

Barbara's Response: Surprisingly, I had erased most of my childhood memories of school and had difficulty remembering a positive or negative experience. The experience, as I look at it as an adult, gives me the shivers. Learning was in a vacuum. I don't remember seeing anyone else's work in *class. We did not share our information or ideas or feelings. Projects were handed back in order by percentage grade starting from the top. It seems to be an inefficient way of learning. It was a direct learning; the answers were either right or wrong. There seemed to be no grey areas. In language arts class, however, I remember taking turns reading aloud. A paragraph to each student. It was painful listening to the students who struggled so hard.*

Karyn's Question: How has this event had an impact on your philosophy?

Barbara's Response: Being fair is important to me. Giving each student some time and attention no matter what level they are at is important to me. I do not like the idea of forcing someone to do something. I don't like teachers who single students out to make the class or the student feel stupid. I would like to break down the inhibitions and fear of making mistakes and lighten the consequences of some actions that were made with no malicious intent. Life is too short.

Karyn's Question: What is the relationship between your philosophy and your instructional practice.

Barbara's Response: I like giving lots of examples, sharing stories, setting up a situation so that everyone can win. I like teaching through guided discovery. I like having students try a variety of ways to accomplish goals, allowing them to pick and make decisions, and then practice. I do not mind holding someone's hand until they feel confident to do it on their own. No matter how silly it may seem to someone watching. I love to give others confidence to do the best job, to create the best possible learning environment and allow the "learner" in everyone to sparkle with interest.

Pheung, another undergraduate student, recalled an important narrative from his time spent as a student in elementary school. He stated that he wanted to share this particular narrative because he still remembered the positive affect this incident had on his life:

I can remember clearly a specific moment in art period during my year as a fourth grade student. (This event more than any other has had an impact on my developing teaching philosophy and practice.) Mr. S. had asked us to draw a picture of a person's face. Mr. S. allowed a few minutes to find a picture that we liked. After we all shuffled around the room, looking through magazines and books for the perfect face to draw, we all returned to our desks and awaited further instruction. Mr. S. held up a picture completed by one of his students the previous year. There were lots of oohs and ahhs in response to the picture. As I gazed at the drawing, I was impressed by the detail and clarity. It looked very much like the original cover on the magazine. Finally, we were given instructions on how to begin our own "Masterpiece".

Mr. S. told us to fold our selected picture in half and to place our folded side on our blank white art paper. Then we were told by Mr. S. to try to complete the face by drawing the opposite half. Using our pencils and erasers, we all began working. With careful drawing, and erasing, we all tried to get the perfect match. There were students going up to Mr. S. asking for some assistance and others just showing him their work. I realized how fast time passes when one is hard at work.

As I was consumed in my work, I heard my name mentioned in conversation. I looked up and saw John, telling Mr. S. that I was using the wrong method or style of drawing. The room became silent. The only sound *heard was that of the people walking around the hallways just outside the classroom door. I looked toward Mr. S's desk to see what was happening. I could see John and Mr. S. talking but I could not make out what they were saying to each other. Mr. S. then turned and looked directly at me. I automatically looked down at my work. (In my culture, when one thinks he or she has done something wrong or has broken a rule, when confronted we are not allowed to look into the eyes of our authoritative model because it is considered disrespectful.) So I did not look up because Mr. S. was my teacher. I was afraid and petrified when I saw Mr. S. get out of his chair from behind his "mighty" desk. I could feel his giant footsteps getting closer. As Mr. S. approached my desk I felt my body temperature rising in fear. Finally Mr. S. was at my desk and I was waiting to hear the word "wrong" aloud! I did not. Mr. S. asked me if I knew what I was doing exactly. I told him, no. Putting his hand on my left shoulder, he called the whole class to attention. Mr. S. then explained to the class that I was using a method called sketching. He told me that I was doing an excellent job and to keep up with the good work.*

Pheung wrote this reflection on his story:

As I reflect on this situation, I can see that Mr. S. accepted me for who I am and he understood my method of learning. Everyone can be taught the same thing, but not everyone will learn it in the same way. There are no two living things alike in this world. There may be twins in a family but within the twins, they each have different genetics, different likes and dislikes, and different personal characteristics. So no two things are alike. What I am trying to say is that not everyone in a class will have the same learning styles. As a teacher, we must accept each student for who they are and try to adapt to each and everyone's method of learning. I believe that we are all learners and *all teachers at some point in our lives. One does not learn from just a particular individual but from everyone we encounter. Together we must all work hard to become better teachers and learners.*

If we can encourage student teachers to listen to their own stories, as Barbara and Pheung have done (and as I have attempted to do), and reflect on these, and to share them through conversation and writing, it would be a step towards a philosophy and defensible practice for learning. In this way it would be possible to deconstruct the hegemony of words tainted by cultural scripts. We might recognize our own childhood in the voices of the children we teach.

Fragmentation and Recursion:
A Cyclical Rhythm of Living Cohesion of Child and Adult

The process of rethinking my role as learner (child/adult) and teacher in the classroom, and at university, has been an organic process. I explored and often questioned major theories of child development, especially those that focus on the process of identity formation. I gathered children's and adults' interpretations of their educational experiences while I was, at the same time, a teacher of elementary school children, an instructor of undergraduate students, and a graduate student myself reflecting on my own experiences. As I formulated questions and searched for answers, I began to experience the certainty of recurrence in a pattern of fragmentation and unity. This "certainty of recurrence,"a familiar pattern of cyclical experiences, did not emerge as a theme which might be regarded as an answer to my questions, but one which came to be recognized. This cyclical rhythm describes how the way children's learning is echoed in the way we learn as adults. In ever widening circles, we become aware of how child and adult experiences, fragmented through time and space, do inform each other in a recursive relationship which is not often acknowledged.

The understanding to which I have come through the process of this inquiry suggest that we must recognize a recursive, cyclical, rhythm of living cohesion between child and teacher/adult. Within the adult rests a child; within the child rests an adult. We are, as Jung (1959) says, both the beginning and the end. Cyclical cohesion bespeaks of fragmentation and recursion. These aspects become visible through the cultural and daily scripts which we interpret and live. Narratives of these scripts bring voice to the unspoken.

For example, seven-year-old McKenzie's story (chapter 8) described an experience which helped me to realize that it was possible to step aside to allow students to occupy teachers' traditional positions. We can listen to children. We can shift positions and relationships in order to encourage their voices, to enable them to articulate their understandings. We can move away from a practice which views children as deficient. We can remember what it is to be a child. We can also allow undergraduate students to remember and value what it was like to be a student/child.

I am suggesting that fragmentation of experiences, and thus fragmentation of our "self", may begin very early in the education of our children and is sustained throughout the education of our "preservice" colleagues in many of our teacher education practices. Clandinin (1993) speaks to this very notion when she describes the discomfort that she, and some of her associates have with the language found in the teacher education programs. She states that there is particular discomfort "with the language because we have learned to talk about our teaching in terms of personal and practical knowing, emotionality, moral dilemmas, and ethic of caring" (p. 3). Even the words "preservice" and "inservice" suggest teaching to be akin to a technical training model for teacher education.

This inquiry, therefore, articulates choice: we may choose to remain the adult who has outgrown the child, whose memories of childhood were neatly boxed, revealed only in that form to children, as a "kit" to be taken out at scheduled intervals; or, we may choose to remember our childhood voices, the scripts we spoke to ourselves before our voices were muffled by the bigger cultural scripts of dominating discourses.

Further Actions

Choosing a course of action that requires us to remember our childhood voices, to become aware of the dichotomy between child and adult in our teaching practices, may be an experience that is at first ambiguous and unclear. However, to continue questioning, to see this measureless space of ambiguity as a realm of infinite possibility, may free us to recognize other dichotomies which may provide opportunities to explore and value multiple perspectives.

The translation of these ideals into practice requires persistent questioning of the taken-for-granted cultural notions. This questioning would permit the expression of multiple perspectives. Let me illustrate the matter of perspective by referring to the story of a 12-year-old Japanese victim of Hiroshima I read to the students in a third-year undergraduate language arts course. This moving story, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes,* was offered as an alternative to the popular North American representation of the tragedy of war. Some students found the details of the girl's suffering "horrific" and called for censorship. Others accused me of subverting the intent of Remembrance Day by choosing this time to share the book. Their comments included:

- Perhaps the book could be presented in an apolitical way.
- Teaching is inherently political.
- It seems that a teacher must be everything to everybody.
- This makes me think of a book. Maybe I could bring it to share because it offers another perspective on the tragedy of war and one family's efforts to try to help at great personal risk to their own safety.

The discussion was at times heated and seeming to promise no consensus, although some students did express a greater appreciation for the importance of acknowledging their own perspectives. My role as teacher-educator then became one of insisting that the students not adopt other points of view, but simply remain open to them, in particular, to the forgotten voice of the child. Whether I am teaching language arts or an introductory curriculum course involving principles of theory and practice in the elementary school classroom, I find that a simple and well-chosen story can lead back to the all-important concept of the teacher educator's pivotal position between self and others, and of teaching as a political, social and personal act. Hence, the story of Sadako.

Teaching, like choosing literature, is also an ethical act. If we choose to remember and reflect on such horrific events as the bombing of Hiroshima, then perhaps through an awareness of moral and ethical ramifications we may be less inclined to reproduce such devastating acts. As teachers, we must be able to confront the reality that allowed Hiroshima to happen, and admit that such conditions remain evident right here and now.

In this country, we have the fourth highest child poverty rate amongst the eight richest countries in the world (Conway, 1993). As a teacher I witness the chilling effects of such statistics in my classroom on a daily basis. I deal with constant hunger and profound sadness. If such statistics still seem too abstract, the Globe and Mail, dated Saturday, November 16, 1996, shows a startling image of the lower part of a small figure suspended from a tree. The reader is left to imagine the grisly scene of the noose around the child's neck. The caption reads: "Young Canadians are killing themselves in such unprecedented numbers that suicide has become — after motor-vehicle accidents — the most common cause of death among them" (p. 1, section D1). The dominant cultural discourse seems to keep me, as a teacher educator, from talking about issues such as this.

Although this is a depressing commentary, I find some hope in that I teach a number of undergraduate students who are courageous enough to address complex and yet relevant issues in their classroom discussion and practice. I also think of seven year old McKenzie I introduced in the last chapter. Through her actions I am reminded of the power of the individual as an agent of change. Teachers and teacher-educators need to have more opportunity to reflect on their experience and how it relates to the experience of others, particularly children. This reflection may allow more people to begin to appreciate how their experience diverges from their culture's sacred story, and to encourage possibilities for imagining a different script. More need the chance to become confident in believing that they can make a difference, that they do have the resources to affect education with their practice.

Repeating the pattern of knowing and questioning, of remembering and rethinking, I remember my brother, Michael, and I wonder how many of the undergraduates that I teach have brothers like him. Even if we would prefer that teaching not be a personal affair, the environment in which we teach is personal. Each one of us has experienced life's narratives which influence who we are becoming. Through creating spaces in which personal stories may be heard and valued, teachers may be in a better position to understand the particulars of an individual story as well as how powerful a culture's sacred script can be in our becoming. I wonder why it seems difficult to acknowledge simultaneously both the uniqueness and the universality of any experience, and why acceptance of one often precludes the option for the other.

Since I have come to believe that education involves the need for social, moral and political awareness, I ask my students to pay close attention to cultural assumptions that undergird some of our curriculum theories and practices. Some of my undergraduate students do not think teaching is about such matters. Rather, they believe that teaching entails primarily being well acquainted with curriculum guides and manuals.

I was pleasantly surprised when one of my students asked if she could share a Native legend entitled *The Vision Seeker*. Her request related to the task we had: exploring possibilities for integrating language arts across the curriculum. She told me that she thought this book would tie in with social studies at the grade five level, in particular the concept of learning to appreciate native culture. She talked very sensitively to the class about her concerns regarding speaking on behalf of another culture.

This is but one example of informed action. Many other examples are evident in my own teaching practice and in the narratives in this inquiry. Some are particularly compelling. A few that come to mind are: advocating/illuminating the need and acceptance of teaching as personal; advocating for justice; respecting and valuing difference; the need for multiple perspectives.

Informed actions do emerge from engaging in a recursive practice.

An Awareness of Wisdom

Cultural scripts can be challenged through conscientious scrutiny of our teaching practices at every level, from elementary school through university. I am encouraged by conversations with other teacher-educators who also are interested in examining their teaching practices. As we continue to question, I believe we can prevent perpetuating a fragmented understanding of human development, and therefore strengthen the potential for valuing differences between people as reciprocal and non-hierarchical. This is not an easy task. It is tiring to question the dominant cultural scripts. Nevertheless, I have found in my experience and in the experience of many of the inquiry-participants that within all of us lies inherent wisdom and an excellent potential for enlarged understanding, of what it is to become a knowing and sentient being.

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